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THOMAS TYRWHITT ESQ.R F.R.S.

From the original Picture in the Poſſeſsion of the Hon.ble & Right Rev.d Dr. Shute Barrington, Lord Bishop of Durham.

THE

CANTERBURY TALES

OF

CHAUCER.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

AN ESSAY

ON HIS

LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION,

AND AN

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE:

TOGETHER WITH

NOTES AND A GLOSSARY.

BY THE LATE

THOMAS TYRWHITT, Esq. F. R. S.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

OXFORD:

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Delegates of the Clarendon Preſs having been applied to, that the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, as publiſhed by the late Mr. Tyrwhitt, might be printed at Oxford more ſplendidly than had been done in the Edition of them in his life-time, they readily acceded to the propoſal, both in compliance with the wiſhes expreſſed to them, and out of their own deſire to ſhew every reſpect on the part of the Univerſity to Mr. Tyrwhitt's name and abilities.

They gave directions therefore, that the work ſhould be undertaken without delay; and, as they had recently done in their publication of the Poetics of Ariſtotle with Notes by the ſame learned perſon, that the execution of it ſhould be conducted with every attention to correctneſs and elegance. But there occurred at the ſame time another circumſtance alſo, in the advantage of which to the preſent Edition of the Canterbury Tales the Public is more intereſted. The Nephew and Executor of the Editor made an offer in the handſomeſt manner to the Delegates, of a copy of the work, which Mr. Tyrwhitt had reſerved for his own uſe, and in which it was found that he had inſerted ſeveral emendations and additions; having reviſed the punctuation and orthography of the Tales themſelves, (though in this he ſeemed to have proceeded no further than the Manciple's Tale,) and in other parts of the work having written ſome things otherwiſe than as he firſt gave them to the world.

It is according to ſuch corrections therefore that the work is now printed, as it is unqueſtionable alſo, that by the adoption of them it has a

new

new value affixed to it. For notwithſtanding that the corrections alluded to are not numerous, wherever they occur, they are the more deliberate opinions of the Editor himſelf; and nothing, it is to be preſumed, will be thought unimportant, which Mr. Tyrwhitt conceived to be a further elucidation of his Author, or a more juſt deciſion upon any point of literature, than that in which he had before acquieſced.

It ſeems unneceſſary to add more, except that in the preſent Edition the errors of the preceding one have been diligently corrected; that the Notes upon the Canterbury Tales have been incorporated, ſo far as could be done with convenience; and that the ſame method has been taken with the Gloſſary, the words, of which the explanation ſtood before in the Supplement, having been inſerted in the firſt alphabet in their due place and order.

The print of Mr. Tyrwhitt prefixed to the work has been contributed by the liberality of the Gentleman already mentioned, the preſent Thomas Tyrwhitt, Eſq. of Welbeck Street, London, who was deſirous to give this teſtimony, amongſt others, of the affection which he always bore to his much honoured relation, and of the reſpect and gratitude which he owes to his memory.

DELEGATES' ROOM,
March 30, 1798.

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THE

PREFACE.

THE firſt object of this publication was to give the text of THE CANTERBURY TALES as correct as the Mss. within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it.

The account of former Editions, in the Appendix to this Preface (A), will ſhew, that this object had hitherto been either entirely neglected, or at leaſt very imperfectly purſued. The Editor therefore has proceeded as if his author had never been publiſhed before. He has formed the text throughout from the Mss. and has paid little regard to the readings of any edition, except the two by Caxton, each of which may now be conſidered as a Manuſcript. A Liſt of the Mss. collated, or conſulted, upon this occaſion is ſubjoined (B).

In order to make the proper uſe of theſe Mss. to unravel the confuſions of their orthography, and to judge between a great number of various readings, it was neceſſary to enquire into the ſtate of our language and verſification at the time when Chaucer wrote, and alſo, as much as was poſſible, into the peculiarities of his ſtyle and manner of compoſition. Nor was it leſs neceſſary to examine with ſome attention the work now intended to be republiſhed; to draw a line between the imperfections, which may be ſuppoſed to have been left in it by the author, and thoſe which

have crept into it ſince; to diſtinguiſh the parts where the author appears as an inventor, from thoſe where he is merely a tranſlator, or imitator; and throughout the whole to trace his alluſions to a variety of forgotten books and obſolete cuſtoms. As a certain degree of information upon all theſe points will be found to be neceſſary even for the reading of the Canterbury Tales with intelligence and ſatisfaction, the Editor hopes he ſhall be excuſed for ſuppoſing, that the majority of his readers will not be diſpleaſed with his attempt to ſhorten at leaſt the labour of their enquiries, by laying before them ſuch parts of the reſult of his own reſearches, as he judges will be moſt conducive to that purpoſe. He has therefore added to the text, 1. AN ESSAY [a] ON THE LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION OF CHAUCER; 2. AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES; and 3. NOTES, into which he has thrown an account of the moſt material various readings; illuſtrations of particular paſſages; and explanations of the moſt uncommon words and phraſes, eſpecially ſuch as are omitted, or ill explained, in the Gloſſary to Urry's Edition.

He had once an intention of adding a Gloſſary *, and a Life of Chaucer. From the former of theſe undertakings he was deterred by the bulk to which this publication had already ſwollen, and by the conſideration, that a Gloſſary, adapted to a part only of Chaucer's writings, muſt neceſſarily be a very imperfect work, the utility of which would by no means be proportionable to the labour employed in compiling it. If this attempt, to

[a] In this ESSAY, Part the third, §. 1—6. is contained a ſhort view of Engliſh Poetry to the time of Chaucer, the trouble of compiling which the Editor might perhaps have ſaved himſelf, if he had foreſeen, that Mr. Warton's HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY would have appeared ſo ſoon. Both the *Eſſay* and the *Introductory Diſcourſe* were printed before Mr. Warton's book was publiſhed; which is mentioned, not ſo much to obviate any ſuſpicion of plagiariſm, as to apologize for whatever defects there may be in either of thoſe treatiſes, from a want of the lights, which that learned and elegant writer has thrown upon all parts of this ſubject.

[* This intention the learned Editor afterwards carried into execution, and publiſhed a Gloſſary in 1778.]

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invite the attention of the public to their too much neglected bard, ſhould ſo far ſucceed as to bring to light any Mss. by the help of which, together with thoſe in the Bodleian and other Libraries, the remainder of the writings of Chaucer might be reſtored to a tolerable degree of purity, a good Gloſſary to the whole would be a moſt uſeful work, and indeed would anſwer all the purpoſes of a Dictionary of our antient Language.

With reſpect to a life of Chaucer, he found, after a reaſonable waſte of time and pains in ſearching for materials, that he coud add few *facts* to thoſe, which have already appeared in ſeveral lives of that poet; and he was not diſpoſed, either to repeat the comments and inventions, by which former biographers have endeavoured to ſupply the deficiency of facts, or to ſubſtitute any of his own for the ſame laudable purpoſe. Inſtead therefore of a formal life of his author, which, upon theſe principles, muſt have been a very meagre narration, he has added to this Preface (c) a ſhort ABSTRACT OF THE HISTORICAL PASSAGES OF THE LIFE OF CHAUCER, with remarks, which may ſerve to ſeparate for the future thoſe paſſages from others, which have nothing to recommend them to credit, but the ſingle circumſtance of having been often repeated.

He will detain the reader no longer than juſt to obſerve, that in the following edition of the Canterbury Tales he does not recollect to have deviated from the Mss. (except, perhaps, by adding the final *n* to a very few words) in any one inſtance, of which the reader is not advertiſed in the notes.

APPENDIX TO THE PREFACE.

(A) AN ACCOUNT OF FORMER EDITIONS OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE Art of Printing had been invented and exerciſed for a conſiderable time, in moſt countries of Europe, before the Art of Criticiſm was called in to ſuperintend and direct its operations. It is therefore much more to the honour of our meritorious countryman William Caxton, that he choſe to make the Canterbury Tales one of the earlieſt productions of his preſs, than it can be to his diſcredit, that he printed them very incorrectly. He probably took the firſt Ms. that he coud procure to print from, and it happened unluckily to be one of the worſt in all reſpects that he coud poſſibly have met with. The very few copies of this Edition, which are now remaining [a], have no date, but Mr. Ames ſuppoſes it to have been printed in 1475 or 6.

It is ſtill more to the honour of Caxton, that when he was informed of the imperfections of his edition, he very readily undertook a ſecond, " for to ſatisfy the author," (as he ſays himſelf,) " whereas tofore by ignorance *he* had erred in hurting and diffaming his book." His whole account of

[a] The late Mr. Weſt was ſo obliging as to lend me a complete copy of this Edition, which is now, as I have heard, in the King's Library. There is another complete copy in the Library of Merton College, which is illuminated, and has a ruled line under every printed one, to give it the appearance, I ſuppoſe, of a Ms. Neither of theſe books, though ſeemingly complete, has any Preface or Advertiſement.

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this matter, in the Preface to this ſecond Edition, is ſo clear and ingenuous, that I ſhall inſert it below in his own words [b]. This Edition is alſo without date, except that the Preface informs us, that it was printed ſix years after the firſt.

Ames mentions an Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, "Collected by William Caxton, and printed by Wynken de Worde at Weſtmeſtre, in 1495. Folio." He does not appear to have ſeen it himſelf, nor have I ever met with any other authority for its exiſtence; which however I do not

[b] Pref. to Caxton's 2d Edit. from a copy in the Library of St. John's Coll. Oxford. *Ames*, p. 55.—Whiche book I have dylygently overſeh, and duly examyned to the ende that it be made accordyng unto his owen makyng; for I fynde many of the ſayd bookes, whiche wryters have abrydgyd it, and many thynges left out, and in ſome places have ſette certayn verſys that he never made ne ſette in hys booke; of whyche bookes ſo incorrecte was one broughte to me vi. yere paſſyd, whiche I ſuppoſed had ben veray true and correcte, and accordyng to the ſame I dyde do enprynte a certayn nomber of them, whyche anon were ſolde to many and dyverſe gentyl men, of whom one gentylman cam to me, and ſayd that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Gefferey Chaucer had made. To whom I anſwered, that I had made it accordyng to my copye, and by me was nothyng added ne mynuſhyd. Thenne he ſayd, he knewe a book whyche hys fader had and moche lovyd, that was very trewe, and accordyng unto hys owen firſt book by hym made; and ſayd more, yf I wold enprynte it agayn, he wold gete me the ſame book for a copye. How be it he wyſt well that hys fader wold not gladly departe fro it. To whom I ſaid, in caas that he coude gete me ſuche a book, trewe and correcte, yet I wold ones endevoyre me to enprynte it agayn, for to ſatisfy the auctour, where as tofore by ygnoraunce I erryd in hurtyng and dyffamyng his book in dyverce places, in ſetting in ſomme thynges that he never ſayd ne made, and leving out many thynges that he made, whyche ben requyſite to be ſette in it. And thus we fyll at accord, and he full gentylly gate of hys fader the ſaid book, and delyvered it to me, by whiche I have corrected my book, as heere after alle alonge by the ayde of almighty God ſhal folowe, whom I humbly beſeche, &c.

Mr. Lewis in his Life of Caxton, p. 104. has publiſhed a minute account of the contents of this edition from a copy in the Library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, but without deciding whether it is the firſt or the ſecond edition.

It is undoubtedly the ſecond; but the Preface is loſt. There is an imperfect copy of this edition in the Muſeum, and another in the Library of the Royal Society. Both together would not make a complete one.

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mean to diſpute. If there was ſuch an Edition, we may be tolerably ſure, that it was only a copy of Caxton's.

This was certainly the caſe of both Pynſon's Editions. He has prefixed to both the introductory part of Caxton's Prohemye to his 2d Edition, without the leaſt alteration. In what follows, he ſays, that he purpoſes to imprint his book [in the firſt Edition] *by a copy of the ſaid Maſter Caxton*, and [in the ſecond] *by a copy of William Caxton's imprinting* [c]. That the Copy, mentioned in both theſe paſſages, by which Pynſon purpoſed to imprint, was really Caxton's ſecond Edition, is evident from the ſlighteſt compariſon of the three books. Pynſon's firſt Edition has no date, but is ſuppoſed (upon good grounds, I think) to have been printed not long after 1491, the year of Caxton's death. His ſecond Edition [d] is dated in 1526, and was the firſt in which a Collection of ſome other pieces of Chaucer was added to the Canterbury Tales.

The next Edition, which I have been able to meet with, was printed by Thomas Godfray in 1532. If this be not the very edition which Leland ſpeaks of [e] as printed by Berthelette, with the aſſiſtance of Mr. William

[c] See the *Probemies* to Pynſon's 1ſt and 2d Editt. in the Preface to Urry's Chaucer. There is a complete copy of Pynſon's 1ſt Edit. in the Library of the Royal Society.

[d] I venture to call this Pynſon's 2d Edit. though Ames (from ſome notes of Bagford) ſpeaks of Editions in 1520 and 1522. He does not appear to have ſeen them himſelf. Mr. Weſt had a copy of the edition of 1526, in which the name of the printer and the date of the impreſſion are regularly ſet down at the end of the Canterbury Tales. After that follow "*Troilus and Creſeide*" and "*the Boke of Fame*," at the end of which laſt is a note, copied from Caxton's edition of the ſame book, with this addition. *And here foloweth another of his workes*. But in Mr. Weſt's copy nothing followed. The writer of the Preface to Ed. Urr. ſeems to have had the uſe of a copy of this Edition in 1526, which contained ſome other pieces of Chaucer's, and ſeveral by other hands. See the Pref. to Ed. Urr.

[e] I think it neceſſary to ſtate Leland's account of the editions of Chaucer in his own words, from Tanner's *Bibl. Brit.* v. Chaucer. "Non alienum meo erit inſtituto palam facere, *Gulielmum Caxodunum*, hominem nec indiligentem nec indoctum, et quem conſtat primum Londini artem exercuiſſe typographicam, *Chauceri* opera, quotquot vel pretio vel precibus

liam Thynne, (as I rather ſuſpect it is,) we may be aſſured that it was copied from that. Mr. Thynne's Dedication to Henry VIII. ſtands at the head

precibus comparare potuit, *in unum volumen collegiſſe.* Vicit tamen Caxodunicam editionem *Bertholetus* noſter operâ *Gulielmi Thynni*, qui multo labore, ſedulitate, ac curâ uſus in perquirendis vetuſtis exemplaribus, multa *primæ* adjecit *editioni.* Sed nec in hac parte caruit *Brianus Tucca*, mihi familiaritate conjunctiſſimus, et Anglicæ linguæ eloquentiâ mirificus, ſuâ gloriâ, editâ in poſtremam impreſſionem *præfatione* elimatâ, luculentâ, eleganti. Sequar igitur codicem *paucis abhinc annis* impreſſum, et promiſſum adponam ſyllabon. He then gives a Syllabus of the works of Chaucer, contained in that Edition, as follows. *Fabulæ Cantianæ* xxiv, quarum duæ ſolutâ oratione ſcriptæ; ſed *Petri Aratoris fabula*, quæ communi doctorum conſenſu Chaucero, tanquam vero parenti, attribuitur, in utrâque editione, quia malos ſacerdotum mores vehementer increpavit, ſuppreſſa eſt. *De arte amandi* alias *Romaunce of the Roſe*, &c."

Before I make any remarks upon this account, I muſt obſerve that it was drawn up by Leland before the year 1540. This appears from his "New Year's gift to Henry VIII. in the xxxvii yeare of his raygne" (1 Jan. 1546.) in which he ſays expreſsly, that he had ſpent the laſt ſix years in travelling about the kingdom, "all his other occupations intermitted," [Ed. 1745. p. xxii. prefixed to Leland's Itin. v. i.] ſo that his book *De Viris illuſtribus*, which he ſpeaks of as finiſhed in the ſame piece, p. xxi. muſt have been finiſhed before he ſet out upon his travels. I will obſerve too, by the way, that the Biographers of Leland ſeem to have confounded theſe laſt ſix years travels with his former travels, in execution of the Commiſſion granted to him by Henry VIII. to ſerche the Libraries of Monaſteries, Colleges, &c. That Commiſſion was granted in the year 1533, 25 H. VIII. but how many years he ſpent in the execution of it, there is no authority, that I can find, for determining with preciſion.

In the account above-quoted, Leland is certainly miſtaken in ſaying that Caxton *collected* the works of Chaucer *into one volume.* He printed two Editions of the Canterbury Tales by themſelves, as has been ſhewn above. He alſo printed Boethius, Troilus and Creſſida, and the Boke of Fame; but each in a ſeparate volume; and ſome ſmaller pieces of Chaucer, intermixed with ſeveral of Lydgate, &c. in another volume, of which the contents may be ſeen in Middleton's Diſſert. p. 263. n. [*d*]; but it does not appear that he ever attempted to collect theſe ſeparate publications into one volume.

Leland is alſo inaccurate, at leaſt, in repreſenting the edition by Thynne as coming next after that by Caxton, without taking any notice of the intermediate editions by Pynſon, and eſpecially that in 1526, in which an attempt was really made to collect the works of Chaucer into one volume.

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head of it; and the great number of Chaucer's works, never before publiſhed, which appear in it, fully entitles it to the commendations, which have

It may appear preſumptuous to go further, and to charge him with inaccuracy in his deſcription of that very edition by Thynne, which he ſeems to have had before his eyes, but I am much inclined to ſuſpect, (as I have intimated in the text,) that the edition which he ſpeaks of as printed by Berthelette was really printed by Godfray, and that the Preface of *Brianus Tucca* (Sir Brian Tuke) which he commends ſo much, was nothing elſe but the Prefatory addreſs, or Dedication, to the King, which is prefixed to Godfray's and other later editions in the name of Mr. William Thynne. The miſtake may not have been ſo extravagant, as it appears to be at firſt. It is poſſible, that Berthelette might be concerned in putting forth the edition of 1532, though it was printed by Godfray; and it is very probable, that the Dedication, (which is in ſuch a ſtyle as I think very likely to be commended by Leland,) though ſtanding in the name of Mr. William Thynne, was compoſed for him by Sir Brian Tuke. Mr. Thynne himſelf, I apprehend, was rather a lover, than a maſter, of theſe ſtudies.

In ſupport of this ſuſpicion I obſerve 1. that the ſyllabus, which Leland has given of the contents of Berthelette's edition, agrees exactly enough with the contents of the edition by Godfray, a few ſmall pieces only being omitted by him. 2. The date of Godfray's Edition in 1532 agrees perfectly with what Leland ſays of the edition in queſtion, (viz. that it was printed *a few years before,)* and with the probable date of Mr. Thynne's edition, which appears to have been publiſhed not earlier than 1530, and certainly not later than 1532. It was not publiſhed earlier than 1530, becauſe *the French Grammer made by an Engliſhman*, mentioned in the Dedication, muſt mean, in all probability, *L'eſclairciſement de la langue Françoiſe* by John Palſgrave, the printing of which was finiſhed by John Hawkins, xviii July, 1530, and the Privilege granted on the 2 September following. It was not later than 1532, becauſe the Dedication appears in Godfray's edition of that year. 3. If Berthelette had printed Mr. Thynne's edition, in 1531 (we will ſuppoſe), it is inconceivable that Godfray ſhould ſet about another edition ſo immediately as to be able to publiſh it the very next year. Though the Printers of that age had a very imperfect notion, I apprehend, of Copy-right at Common Law, they may be preſumed to have had always a certain Common Senſe, which would reſtrain them from undertaking a new impreſſion of a book, while a conſiderable number of copies of a former impreſſion remained unſold, whether thoſe copies belonged to themſelves or to others. Beſides, Godfray's edition has no appearance of a haſty, piratical impreſſion. It is upon a fine paper, and the types and preſswork are remarkably neat and elegant. 4. I think we have Berthelette's own authority for believing that he did not print Mr. Thynne's edition of Chaucer. In the Preface to

Gower's

have always been given to Mr. Thynne's edition on that account. Accordingly, it was ſeveral times reprinted as the ſtandard edition of Chaucer's

Gower's *Confeſſio Amantis*, which he publiſhed in this very year 1532, after having mentioned *Troylus and Creſeyde*, he goes on thus: "The whiche noble warke and many other of the ſayde Chauſers, that never were before imprinted, and thoſe that very fewe men knewe and fewer hadde them, be now of late put forthe together in a fayre volume." There can be no doubt that in this paſſage he refers to Mr. Thynne's edition, and if he had printed it himſelf, I think he would certainly have claimed the honour of it. At the ſame time, the favourable manner in which he ſpeaks of it, would lead one to imagine, (as has been ſuggeſted above,) that he had ſome concern in it.

Upon the whole therefore I am perſuaded, that the edition by Godfray in 1532 is the edition, which Leland ſpeaks of as printed by Berthelette. I have given above what I conjecture to have been the probable grounds of his miſtake. But indeed, when we recollect the hurry in which this work of Leland muſt have been compiled, and that it was left by him unfiniſhed, we need not ſeek for any other cauſes of the inaccuracies with which it abounds. In the latter part of the paſſage cited above, he ſpeaks of *The Ploughman's Tale* by the title of *Petri Aratoris fabula*, confounding it, in the title at leaſt, with *Pierce Ploughman's Viſions*. For I do not ſuppoſe that he meant to attribute *the Viſions* to Chaucer; though in fact the one might as well be attributed to him as the other.

Notwithſtanding the immoderate length of this note, I muſt not ſuppreſs another teſtimony, which may be produced in favour of the exiſtence of an Edition of Chaucer by Mr. Thynne, diſtinct from that printed by Godfray. Mr. Speght in his Life of Chaucer has the following paſſage: "M. William Thynn in his firſt printed booke of Chaucers works with one columbe on a ſide, had a Tale called the Pilgrims tale, which was more odious to the Clergie, than the ſpeach of the Plowman. The tale began thus: *In Lincolneſhire faſt by a fenne: Standeth a religious houſe who doth it kenne.* The argument of which tale, as alſo the occaſion thereof, and the cauſe why it was left out of Chaucers works, ſhall hereafter be ſhewed, if God permit, in M. Fran. Thyns coment upon Chaucer: and the Tale itſelfe publiſhed *if poſſibly it can be found.*"

It muſt be allowed that this deſcription of Mr. Thynne's firſt edition, "with *one columne on a ſide*, and *a tale* called *the Pilgrim's tale*," does not ſuit the edition printed by Godfray, which is in two columns and has no Pilgrim's tale. But I obſerve, that Mr. Speght does not pretend to have ſeen this book. He even doubts whether the Tale *can be found*. If therefore I ſhould be able to prove, that the Tale, which he ſpeaks of, coud not poſſibly be in Mr. Thynne's firſt edition, I preſume no great ſtreſs will be laid upon the other part of

cer's works, without any material alteration, except the inſertion of the Plowman's tale in 1542, of which I have ſpoken in the Diſcourſe, &c. n. 32.

As

his evidence, in which he ſuppoſes that edition to have been printed with only one columne on a ſide.

It appears very ſtrange, at firſt ſight, that the Plowman's Tale (according to Leland) ſhould have been ſuppreſſed in Mr. Thynne's edition, *quia malos ſacerdotum mores vehementer increpavit*, and that he ſhould have inſerted this Pilgrim's Tale, which, as Mr. Speght tells us, was ſtill *more odious to the Clergie*. A few years after, when the Reformation was further advanced, in 1542, the Plowman's Tale is inſerted among Chaucer's works and the Pilgrim's Tale is ſuppreſſed! But there is no occaſion to inſiſt upon theſe little improbabilities. Though Mr. Speght did not know where to find the Pilgrim's Tale, and the Printer of the Edit. in 1687 aſſures us, that he had ſearched for it "in the public libraries of both Univerſities," and alſo "in all private libraries that he could have acceſs unto," I have had the good fortune to meet with a copy *. It is entitled, "*The Pylgrymſe tale*," and begins thus:

In Lincolneſhyr faſt by the ſene
Ther ſtant an hows and you yt ken,
And callyd ſempynham of religion
And is of an old foundation, &c.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this is the piece of which Mr. Speght had received ſome confuſed intelligence. It ſeems to have been mentioned by *Bale* among Chaucer's works, in the following manner. "*Narrationes diverſorum, Lib.* i. *In comitatu Lincolnienſi fuit—*" *Script. Brit.* p. 526. Ed. 1559. But it is impoſſible that any one who had read it ſhould aſcribe it to Chaucer. He is quoted in it twice by name, fol. xxxiii. and fol. xlv. and in the latter place the reference ſeems to be made to a printed book. The reader ſhall judge.—

* The copy, of which I ſpeak, is in the black letter, and ſeems to have once made part of a volume of miſcellaneous poems in 8vo. The firſt leaf is numbered xxxi. and the laſt xlv. *The Pilgrim's tale* begins about the middle of *fol.* xxxi. *verſ.* and continues to the end of the fragment, where it breaks off imperfect. The firſt leaf has a running title—*Venus The Court of*—and contains the ten laſt lines of one poem, and another whole poem of twenty lines, before *the Pilgrim's tale.*

This curious fragment was purchaſed at the Auction of Mr. Weſt's library, in a lot (N° * 1040) of *Sundry fragments of old black-letter books*, by Mr. Herbert of Gulſton's Square, who very obligingly permitted me to examine it.

He

As my buſineſs here is ſolely with the Canterbury Tales, I ſhall take no notice of the ſeveral miſcellaneous pieces, by Chaucer and others, which were added to them by Mr. Thynne in his Edition, and afterwards by Stowe and Speght in the Editions of 1561, 1597, and 1602. With reſpect to the Canterbury Tales, I am under a neceſſity of obſerving, that, upon the whole, they received no advantage from the edition of 1532. Its material variations from Caxton's *ſecond* edition are all, I think, for the worſe. It confounds the order of the *Squier's* [f] and the *Frankelein's* [g] tales,

He ſayd he durſt not it diſcloſe,
But bad me reyd the Romant of the Roſe,
The thred leafe juſt from the end,
To *the ſecund page* ther he did me ſend,
He prayd me thes vi. ſtavis for to marke,
Whiche be *Chaucers* awn hand wark.
¶ Thus moche woll our boke ſygnify
That while Peter hath maſtery, &c.

[Then follow four more lines from Chaucer's R. R. v. 7263—8. Ed. Urr.] It is not uſual, at leaſt, to cite MSS. by *the leaf* and *the page*. But if this citation was really made from a printed book, the Pilgrim's tale muſt have been written after Mr. Thynne's edition, for Chaucer's tranſlation of the Romant of the Roſe was firſt printed in that edition. Another paſſage will fix the date of this compoſition ſtill more clearly. In fol. xxxix. xl. are the following lines:

Perkin werbek and Jak ſtraw
And now of late *our cobler* the dawe.

One would not expect to find any mention of *Perkin Warbeck* in a work attributed to Chaucer; but, paſſing that over, I think it is plain, that *our cobler*, in the ſecond line, means the leader of the Lincolnſhire rebels in 1536, who, as Hollinſhed tells us, p. 941. "called himſelf *Captaine Cobler*, but was indeed a monk, named Doctor Mackarell." *The Pilgrim's tale* therefore was not written till *after* 1536, and conſequently coud not poſſibly be in Mr. Thynne's firſt Edition, which, as has been ſhewn above, was printed *at lateſt* in 1532.

[f] See the Diſcourſe, &c. §. xxiii. and Note on ver. 10293.

[g] See the Diſcourſe, &c. §. xxv. and Note on ver. 10985.

which Caxton, in his *ſecond* Edition, had ſet right. It gives the *Frankelein's* Prologue to the *Merchant*, in addition to his own proper Prologue [h]. It produces for the firſt time two Prologues, the one to the *Doctour's*, and the other to the *Shipman's* tale, which are both evidently ſpurious [i]; and it brings back the lines of ribaldry [k] in the *Merchant's* tale, which Caxton, in his *ſecond* Edition, had rejected upon the authority of his good Ms.

However, this Edition of 1532, with all its imperfections, had the luck, as I have ſaid, to be conſidered as the ſtandard edition, and to be copied, not only by the Bookſellers, in their ſeveral Editions [l] of 1542, 1546, 1555, and 1561, but alſo by Mr. Speght, (the firſt Editor in form, after Mr. Thynne, who ſet his name to his work,) in 1597 and 1602. In the Dedication to Sir Robert Cecil, prefixed to this laſt edition, he ſpeaks indeed of having "reformed the whole work, both by old written copies and by Ma. William Thynnes praiſe-worthy labours," but I cannot find that he has departed in any material point from thoſe editions, which I have ſuppoſed to be derived from Mr. Thynne's. In the very material points abovementioned, in which thoſe editions vary from Caxton's ſecond, he has followed *them*. Nor have I obſerved any ſuch verbal varieties, as would induce one to believe that he had conſulted any good Ms. They who have read his Preface, will probably not regret, that he did not do more towards correcting the text of Chaucer.

[h] See the ſame Section and Note.

[i] See them in all the Editt. ſince 1532.

[k] See the Note on ver. 10227. The lines themſelves are in all the common Editt.

[l] There are ſome other Editions mentioned by Ames, without date, but it is probable that, upon inſpection, they would appear to be one or other of the Editions, whoſe dates are here given. It ſeems to have been uſual to print books in partnerſhip, and for each partner to print his own name to his ſhare of the impreſſion. See Ames, p. 252. A Bible is ſaid to be printed in 1551, by Nicholas Hill—"at the coſt and charges of certayne honeſt menne of the occupacyon, *whoſe names be upon their bokes.*"

In

In this ſtate the Canterbury Tales remained [m] till the edition undertaken by Mr. Urry, which was publiſhed, ſome years after his death, in 1721. I ſhall ſay but little of that edition, as a very fair and full account of it is to be ſeen in the modeſt and ſenſible Preface prefixed to it by Mr. Timothy Thomas [n], upon whom the charge of publiſhing Chaucer devolved, or rather was impoſed, after Mr. Urry's death. The ſtrange licence, in which Mr. Urry appears to have indulged himſelf, of lengthening and ſhortening Chaucer's words according to his own fancy, and of even adding words of his own, without giving his readers the leaſt notice, has made the text of Chaucer in his Edition by far the worſt that was ever publiſhed.

[m] It may be proper juſt to take notice, that Mr. Speght's Edition was reprinted in 1687, with an Advertiſement at the end, in which the Editor pretended to publiſh from a Ms. *the Concluſion of* the Coke's Tale *and alſo of* the Squires Tale, *which in the printed books are ſaid to be loſt or never finiſhed by the author*.—Theſe Concluſions may be ſeen in the Preface to Ed. Urr. Whoever the Editor was, I muſt do him the juſtice to ſay, that they are both really to be found in Ms. The firſt is in Ms. B. α. and the other in Ms. B. ∂. from which Hearne has alſo printed it, as a choice diſcovery, in his Letter to Bagford. App. to R. G. p. 601. If I thought the Reader had any reliſh for ſuch ſupplements to Chaucer, I coud treat him from Ms. B. α. with at leaſt thirty more lines, which have been inſerted in different parts of *the Cook's Tale*, by the ſame hand that wrote this Concluſion. It ſeems to have been an early, though very unſucceſsful, attempt to ſupply the deficiencies of that Tale, before any one had thought of tacking *Gamelyn* to it.

[n] I learn this from a Ms. note in an interleaved copy of Urry's Chaucer, preſented to the Britiſh Muſeum by Mr. William Thomas, a brother, as I apprehend, of Mr. T. Thomas. T. Thomas was of Chriſt-Church, Oxford, and died in 1751, aged lix. In another note Mr. W. Thomas informs us, that the *Life of Chaucer*, in that edition, was very uncorrectly drawn up by Mr. Dart, and corrected and enlarged by W. T. (i. e. himſelf.) The ſame Mr. W. Thomas has taken a great deal of unneceſſary pains in collating that copy of Urry's Edit. with ſeveral Mss. The beſt part of the various readings ſerves only to correct the arbitrary innovations, which Mr. Urry had introduced into the text. He has employed himſelf to better purpoſe upon the Gloſſary, where he has made many emendations and additions, which may be of conſiderable uſe, if ever a new Gloſſary to Chaucer ſhall be compiled.

Since

Since this there has been no complete Edition of the Canterbury Tales. A volume in 8vo containing the Prologue and the Knightes Tale, with large explanatory notes, &c. was publiſhed in 1737, by a Gentleman, (as I am informed,) who has ſince diſtinguiſhed himſelf by many other learned and uſeful publications. He appears to have ſet out upon the only rational plan of publiſhing Chaucer, by collating the beſt Mss. and ſelecting from them the genuine readings; and accordingly his edition, as far as it goes, is infinitely preferable to any of thoſe which preceded it.

(B) A LIST OF MSS. COLLATED, OR CONSULTED, WITH THE ABBREVIATIONS BY WHICH THEY ARE CITED.

In the Museum.

A. Ms. Harl. 7335.
B. Ms. Reg. 18 C. ii. In Urry's Liſt, vii.
C. Ms. Harl. 7334.
D. Ms. Reg. 17 D. xv. In Urry's Liſt, viii.
E. Ms. Harl. 7333.
F. Ms. Harl. 1758. In Urry's Liſt, i.
G. Ms. Sloane. A. 1685. xxii. D. In Urry's Liſt, iii.
H. Ms. Sloane. A. 1686. xxii. D. In Urry's Liſt, iv.
I. Ms. Harl. 1239. In Urry's Liſt, ii.

At Oxford.

In the *Bodleian* Library.

B. α. N° 2527. in the printed Catalogue.
B. ε. N° 1234. Ibid.
B. γ. N° 1476. Ibid.
B. δ. N° 3360. Ibid.
B. ε. N° 4138. Ibid.
B. ζ. N° 6420. Ibid.

N C. A Ms. in the Library of *New College*.

At Cambridge.

C. 1. In the Public Library. N° D. d. 4. 24.
C. 2. Ibid. N° I. i. 3. 26.

T. Ms.

T. Ms. in the Library of *Trinity College*, N° R. 3. 3.

Tt. Ibid. N° R. 3. 15.

Aſk. 1. 2. Two Mss. lent to me by the late Dr. Aſkew. The ſecond has in it the Arms of Henry Deane, Archbiſhop of Canterbury. 1501—3.

H A. A Ms. lent to me by Edward Haiſtwell, Eſq.

W. A Ms. in the poſſeſſion of the late Mr. P. C. Webb.

Ch. N. Two Mss. deſcribed in the Pref. to Ed. Urr. the one as belonging to Charles Cholmondeley, Eſq. of Vale Royal, in Cheſhire, and the other to Mr. Norton, of Southwick, in Hampſhire. The Editor quotes them from the Collations of Mr. W. Thomas, mentioned above in this App. A. note *n*.

Of theſe Mss. the moſt credit is certainly due to the five following, viz. A. C. 1. Aſk. 1. 2. and H A. The four laſt exhibit the Tales in exactly the ſame order in which they are printed in this edition; and ſo does A. except that it wants the *Cokes* Tale [See the Diſcourſe, &c. §. xiii.] and has the *Nonnes* Tale inſerted between the *Sompnoures* and the *Clerkes*. It is alſo unluckily very imperfect; beginning only at ver. 1204. and ending (with ſeveral intermediate breaks) at ver. 12610. in the *Pardoner's* Tale.

N. B. The Editt. of Chaucer by Caxton and Pynſon are cited by theſe abbreviations; Ca. 1. 2. Pynſ. 1. 2.—Sp. and Urr. are put for the Editt. by Speght and Urry.—M. ſtands for the Edit. of *the Prologue and Knight's Tale* in 1737.—The other Editt. are cited by their reſpective dates. If no date is mentioned, the reference is to the Edit. of 1542 by John Reyne.

AN

(c) AN ABSTRACT OF THE HISTORICAL PASSAGES OF THE LIFE OF CHAUCER.

THE Birth of Chaucer in 1328 has been ſettled, I ſuppoſe, from ſome inſcription on his tomb-ſtone, ſignifying that he died in 1400, at the age of 72. Of his birth itſelf we have no memorial, any more than of his parents[a]. He calls himſelf a *Londenois*, or *Londoner*, in the *Teſtament of Love*; B. i. fol. 325. and in another paſſage, fol. 321. ſpeaks of the city of London as the place of his *engendrure*.

We are more in the dark about the place of his education. In his *Court of Love*, ver. 912. he ſpeaks of himſelf under the name and character of "Philogenet—*of Cambridge*, Clerk." This is by no means a deciſive proof that he was really educated at Cambridge; but it may be admitted, I think, as a ſtrong argument that he was not educated at Oxford; as Leland has ſuppoſed, without the ſhadow of a proof[b]. The Biographers however, inſtead of weighing one of theſe accounts againſt the other, have adopted both; and tell us very gravely, that he was firſt at Cambridge, and afterwards removed from thence to complete his ſtudies at Oxford.

It

[a] Mr. Speght has referred to ſeveral Records in which the name of Chaucer occurs. There is mention in the *Monaſt. Ang.* vol. iii. p. 326. of a *Johannes le Chauſer, civis Londonienſis*, an. 1299. who may poſſibly have been our Poet's Grandfather. Though Leland ſays, that he was *nobili loco natus*, Mr. Speght informs us, that "in the opinion of ſome heralds—he deſcended not of any great houſe, which they gather by his Armes." I am inclined to believe the Heralds, rather than Leland.

The name of *Chaucer* is explained [Life of Ch. Urr.] to ſignify *a ſhoe-maker*; but it rather means *un faiſeur de chauſſes ou culottiers*. Dict. de Lacombe, v. *Chaucier*. According to what is ſaid to be the old ſpelling of it, *Chauceſir*, it might be not improbably derived from *Chauſſecire*, an office, which ſtill ſubſiſts under the title of *Chafewax*.

[b] The ſingle circumſtance, by which Leland has endeavoured to ſtrengthen his ſuppoſition that Chaucer was educated at Oxford, is another ſuppoſition that he was born in Oxfordſhire or Berkſhire. The latter has been ſhewn above to be falſe.

It were to be wiſhed that Mr. Speght had given us the date of that Record in the Inner Temple, (which he ſays, a Mr. Buckley had ſeen,) where " Geffrey Chaucer was fined two ſhillings for beating a Franciſcane frier in Fleet-ſtreet [c]." Leland has alſo told us, that our author " *collegia Leguleiorum frequentavit* after his travels in France, and perhaps before." I muſt obſerve, that theſe travels in France reſt entirely upon the authority of Leland, whoſe account is full of inconſiſtencies.

The firſt authentic memorial, which we have of Chaucer, is the Patent in Rymer, 41 E. III. by which that King grants to him an annuity of 20 marks, by the title of *Valettus noſter* [d]. He was then in the 39th year of his

[c] Though this be but a blind ſtory, it rather inclines me to believe that Chaucer was of the Inner Temple *in the early part of his life*, before he went into the ſervice of Edward III. The circumſtance recorded is plainly a *youthful* ſally. On the contrary, Leland ſuppoſes his *principal* reſidence in the Inns of Court to have been *after* he had *flouriſhed* in France, *about the laſt years* of Richard II; which is totally incredible. Indeed Leland, through his whole account of our author, ſeems to have conſidered him as living at leaſt twenty years later than he really did. He takes no notice of the beſt authenticated circumſtances of Chaucer's life in the time of Edward III. and he repreſents him as highly eſteemed by Henry IV. and HIS SON, *qui de Gallis triumphavit*. Henry V. was ſcarcely twelve years of age, when Chaucer died.

[d] *Our Yeoman.* Mr. Speght, who omits this grant, mentions one of the ſame purport in the 45 E. III. in which Chaucer is ſtyled *Valettus Hoſpitii*, which he tranſlates—*Grome of the Pallace.* By this he ſinks our author as much too low as another writer has raiſed him too high, by tranſlating the ſame words—*Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber* [Life of Ch. Urr.]. *Valet*, or *Yeoman*, was the intermediate rank between *Squier* and *Grome*. See the note on ver. 101. See alſo the Will of Edward Duke of York, *ap. Rymer*, an. 1415. where his legacies *to his menial ſervants* are thus arranged—a un Eſcuier L s. a [un] vadlet XX s. a un garc [on . . .] & a un page VI s. VIII d.

Valettus is probably a corruption of *Vaſſalettus*, the diminutive of *Vaſſallus*. Hence this title was alſo given, not as a name of ſervice, to young men of the higheſt quality, before they were knighted.

Il ot un fiz de ſa mulier,
Ki neit pas uncore chivaler,
Vallet eſteit et beaus et gent.— *Roman d'Ipomedon.*

So

his age. How long he had ſerved the King in that, or any other, ſtation, and what particular merits were rewarded by this royal bounty[e], are points equally unknown.

From this time we find frequent mention of him in various public inſtruments.

So that if Edward III. as Mr. Speght ſays, "did entitle Laurence Haſtings, Lord of Aburganey,—*Valectum noſtrum*," I ſhould gueſs, that the ſaid Lord was *not* "the King's grome, page, or ſervant," as he ſuppoſes, or his yeomen, as Chaucer was, but his *Ward*.

[e] I ſhould have been glad to have met with any ground for ſuppoſing, that this mark of Royal favour was a reward of our author's poetical merits. That Chaucer had before this time diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his poetical performances, is almoſt certain. I have mentioned a ſuſpicion [n. on ver. 1920.] that the *Aſſemblee of Foules* alludes to the Courtſhip of Blanche of Lancaſter by John of Gaunt, who married her in 1359, the 33d year of E. III. And perhaps the *Complaint of the Blacke Knight* might be written for John of Gaunt during the ſame Courtſhip. It is ſtill more probable that his Tranſlation of the *Roman de la Roſe* and his *Troilus* were both compoſed before 1367, the æra of which we are ſpeaking. But I think, if the King had really patroniſed Chaucer as a Poet, we muſt have found ſome clear evidence of ſuch a connection. If the one had been fond of verſes, the other would certainly have given him ſome; eſpecially as he might have exerted his genius in the praiſe of ſo illuſtrious a Patron without any neceſſity of flattering. If we conſider further, that, a few years after, the King appointed him to be Comptroller of the Cuſtom of Wool, &c. in the Port of London, with the following injunction in his Patent,—"*So that the ſaid Geffrey write with his own hand his rolls touching the ſaid office, and continually reſide there, and do and execute all things pertaining to the ſaid office in his own proper perſon and not by his ſubſtitute*,"—we ſhall probably be of opinion, that His Majeſty was either totally inſenſible of our author's poetical talents, or at leaſt had no mind to encourage him in the cultivation or exerciſe of them. It ſhould ſeem that Edward, though adorned with many Royal and Heroic virtues, had not the gift of diſcerning and patroniſing a great Poet; a gift, which, like that of genuine Poetry, if we may believe one, who perhaps ſpoke feelingly upon the ſubject, is only beſtowed on the choſen few by the peculiar favour of heaven:

—neque enim, NISI CARUS AB ORTU
DIIS SUPERIS, poterit MAGNO faviſſe POETÆ.

Milton's MANSUS.

I obſerve however, that, notwithſtanding the petrifying quality, with which theſe Cuſtom-

ſtruments [f]. In the 46 E. III. [*ap. Rymer.*] the King appoints him Envoy, with two others to Genoa, by the title of *Scutifer noſter* [g]. In the 48 E. III. he has a grant for life of a pitcher of wine daily [*ap. Rymer.*]; and in the ſame year a grant, during pleaſure, of the offices of Comptroller of the cuſtom of wools, and Comptroller of the parva cuſtuma vinorum, &c. in the Port of London. *Ibid.* In the 49 E. III. the King grants to him the Wardſhip of Sir Edmund Staplegate's Heir [*Mss. Rymer*, E. III. vol. xi. n. 12.], for which he received 104l. [Ibid. R. II. vol. 1. n. 16.]; and in the next year ſome forfeited wool to the value of 71l. 4s. 6d. [Life of Ch. Urr.]. In the laſt year of Ed. III. he was ſent to France, with Sir Guichard D'Angle and Richard Stan, or *Sturry*, to treat of a marriage between the Prince of Wales, Richard, and a daughter of the French King. *Froiſſart*, v. i. ch. 325.

In the next year, 1 R. II. his annuity of 20 marks was confirmed to him, and another annuity of 20 marks was granted to him in lieu of the pitcher of wine daily. See the Licence to ſurrender theſe grants in the Life

houſe accounts might be expected to operate upon Chaucer's genius, he probably wrote his *Houſe of Fame* while he was in that office. I gather this from B. ii. ver. 144. where the Eagle ſays to him,—

For when thy labour al done is,
And haſt made all thy *rekenynges*,
In ſtede of reſt and of newe thynges
Thou goeſt home to thyne houſe anone, &c.

[f] In the 44 E. III. Galf. Ch. in obſequium R. ad partes tranſmarinas profecturus hab. lit. R. de protectione, 20. Jun. [Ms. Harl. 6960. fol. 205.]

[g] *Our Squier*; ſo that in the courſe of theſe five years our author had been promoted from the rank of *Yeoman*, to that of *Squier*, attendant upon the King. *Scutifer* and *Armiger*, LAT. are ſynonymous terms for the French *Eſcuier*. The Biographers thinking, I ſuppoſe, the title of *Squier* too vulgar, have changed it into *Shield-bearer*, as if Chaucer had the ſpecial office of carrying the King's ſhield.

Some obſervations have been made upon this appointment of Chaucer, as Envoy to Genoa, in the Diſcourſe, &c. n. 20.

Life of Ch. Urr. It is probable too that he was confirmed in his Office of Comptroller, though the inſtrument has not been produced [h]. In the 11th of R. II. he had the King's Licence to ſurrender his two grants of 20 marks each in favour of John Scalby [i]. In the 13th R. II. he appears to have been Clerk of the works at Weſtminſter, &c. and in the following year

[h] This is probable, I think, becauſe Chaucer, in his Teſtament of Love, frequently alludes to his loſs of Office, as one of the greateſt misfortunes brought upon him by his *meddling* in thoſe diſturbances, which happened in the city of London in the 7th of R. II. When he fled, to avoid being examined in relation to thoſe diſturbances (as he ſays, Teſt. of L. fol. 329. b.), he was probably ſuperſeded in his office.

In the Editor's Ms. additions the following grants, and the dates of them, are thus ſpecified:

1 R. II. New grant of Comptroller of Wools, 22 Jan. Ms. Harl. 6961. fol. 2.
5 R. II. New grant of Comptroller of parva Cuſtuma vinorum, 20 Apr. Ibid. fol. 51.
8 R. II. Grant to execute the office of Comptroller by a deputy, 17 Feb. Ibid. fol. 74.

[i] This Licence, reciting the two grants, is printed in the Life of Ch. Urr. and the author of that life has obſerved, that this ſurrender was probably occaſioned by our Author's diſtreſſed circumſtances. Either he deſpaired of procuring payment of his penſions, or perhaps wanted to raiſe a ſum of ready money. The ſame writer has extracted from the *Teſtament of Love* almoſt all that is now to be known of the hiſtory of this diſtreſs, which he aſcribes very truly to Chaucer's unfortunate engagements with that party in the city of London, of which John of Northampton was at the head. What the real deſigns of that party were, and how a trifling City-riot, as it ſeems to have been, came to be treated as a rebellion, are points of great obſcurity. There is good ground to believe that Northampton was connected with the Duke of Lancaſter. At his trial, in Auguſt 1384, he contended, "that he ought not to be tried in the abſence of his lord the Duke:" *quo verbo* (ſays Walſingham, p. 310.) *ſuſcitavit ſuſpicionem ſiniſtram tam vulgi quam procerum contra Ducem.* He was condemned however to perpetual impriſonment; in which he remained till July 1390, when (according to the Monk of Eveſham, p. 122.) *ad inſtantiam Ducis Lancaſtriæ*, Johannes Northampton—*et ſocii ſui nuper de Londoniis banniti, reſtituti ſunt ad priſtinas libertates.* The judgement againſt him was reverſed in Parliament the next year, *Rot. Parl.* 14 R. II. n. 36. and he was reſtored to his lands, &c. the year following, *Rot. Parl.* 15 R. II. n. 33. This connexion of Northampton with the Duke of Lancaſter will account for the part which Chaucer appears to have taken in this unhappy affair. He was very early attached to that Duke, and was at this time married to a ſiſter of Catharine Swinford, the Duke's miſtreſs; and

year at Windſor [k]. In the 17th R. II. the King granted to him a new annuity of twenty pounds [*ap. Rymer.*] [l]; —in the 21ſt, his Protection for two years [*Ibid.*]; —and in the 22d, a pipe of wine annually. *Ibid.* In the next year, the 1ſt H. IV. his two grants, of the annuity of 20l. and of the pipe of wine, were confirmed to him [*Mss. Rymer*, H. IV. vol. i. n. 27.], and at the ſame time he had an additional grant of an annuity of 40 marks. *Ibid.* n. 15. He died, according to the inſcription on his tomb-ſtone, in the beginning of the 2 H. IV. on the 25th of October, 1400.

Theſe, I think, are the principal facts in Chaucer's life, which are atteſted by authentic evidences [m]. We learn from himſelf, in his *Treatiſe on the*

and it is obſervable, that the firſt mark of royal favour, which he received after his diſtreſſes, was beſtowed upon him at the ſame time that Northampton received his pardon, and probably through the ſame mediation.

[k] See Tanner's Bib. Brit. v. CHAUCER, n. e. It may juſtly be doubted whether theſe two offices together indemnified our author for the loſs of his former office in the Cuſtoms. That was probably a very lucrative one. He complains of "being berafte out of dignitie of Office, in which he made a gatheringe of worldly godes;" and in another place he ſpeaks of himſelf as "once glorious in worldly welefulneſſe, and having ſuche godes in welthe as maken men riche." Teſt. of L. fol. 326. a. b. But that he ſhould ever have been poſſeſſed of "lands and revenues to the yearly value almoſt of a thouſand pounds," according to the tradition repeated by Mr. Speght, is quite incredible.

[l] If Chaucer was ever poſſeſſed of Dunnington-caſtle in Berkſhire, as his Biographers ſuppoſe he was, he muſt have purchaſed it about this time; for it appears to have been in the poſſeſſion of Sir Richard Abberbury in the 16th year of R. II. *Monaſt. Ang.* ii. 474. We have no proof of any ſuch purchaſe, and the ſituation of his affairs makes it highly improbable. The tradition, which Mr. Evelyn mentions in his *Sylva*, of an oak in Dunnington-park called *Chaucer's oak*, may be ſufficiently accounted for without ſuppoſing that it was planted by Chaucer himſelf, as the Caſtle was undoubtedly in the hands of Thomas Chaucer for many years.

[m] It appears further from the *Exitus, Paſch.* 4 R. II. [Mss. Rymer, R. II. vol. ii. n. 3.] that Chaucer, on the 24 May, 1381, received at the Exchequer a half-year's payment of his own

the Aſtrolabe, that he had a ſon, called *Lowis*, who was ten years of age in 1391. It is the only circumſtance, as I recollect, relating to his family, of which he has informed us. A few other hiſtorical particulars relating to himſelf, which may be collected from his writings, have been taken notice of already; and perhaps a more attentive examination of his works might furniſh a few more. We muſt be cautious however, in ſuch an examination,

own two annuities of 20 marks each, and alſo a half-year's payment of an annuity of 10 marks, granted by E. III. and confirmed by R. II. to his *wife* Philippa, *nuper uni domicellarum Philippæ, nuper Reginæ Angliæ*. The title given to her of *domicella* proves that ſhe was unmarried at the time of her being in the Queen's ſervice. There is a patent in Rymer, 43 E. III. by which the King, about four months after Queen Philippa's death, grants annuities to nine of her *Domicellæ*, viz. to four of them 10 marks, to two 5 pounds, and to three 5 marks. One of them is called *Philippa Pykard*, and might very well be ſuppoſed to be the lady whom Chaucer afterwards married, if it were not for two objections, 1. that the annuity granted to her is only 5 pounds, whereas Chaucer's wife appears by this record to have had one of 10 marks; and 2. that the Hiſtorians, though they own themſelves totally ignorant of the Chriſtian name of Chaucer's wife, are all agreed that her ſurname was *Rouet*, the ſame with that of her father and eldeſt ſiſter, Catharine Swynford. The firſt objection might be got over by ſuppoſing that her annuity, though at firſt only 5 pounds, was encreaſed, perhaps upon her marriage with Chaucer, to 10 marks. As to the other point, it is not impoſſible that the father, and the eldeſt ſiſter, who was his *heireſs* [See Pat. 13 H. IV. p. 1. m. 35. *ap. Rymer.*], might bear the name of *de Rouet*, (or *de Roelt*, as it is in the Pat. 13 H. IV. juſt quoted,) from ſome eſtate in their poſſeſſion, and yet the younger Siſter might be called by the family-name of *Pykard*.

If the records of payments at the Exchequer for the eleven years preceding 1381 are ſtill in being, they may enable us to clear up theſe doubts, and alſo, perhaps, to aſcertain very nearly the time of Chaucer's marriage, as they will probably ſhew when he began to receive his wife's annuity. If this laſt point were aſcertained, we ſhould know better what to think of the relation of Thomas Chaucer to our author. Mr. Speght informs us, "that ſome held opinion, that Thomas C. was not the ſonne of Geffrey," and there are certainly many circumſtances which might incline us to that opinion. I was in hopes of meeting with ſome light upon this ſubject in a Poem which Lydgate is ſaid to have written, entitled, "A Complaint upon the departure of Thomas Chaucer into France, upon the Kynges Ambaſſate." A Poem, with this title, is extant in Ms. *Harl.* 367. 33. in the hand-writing of J. Stowe; but upon inſpection I found it to be a mere love-ballad, without the leaſt imaginable reference to Thomas Chaucer.

tion, of ſuppoſing alluſions which Chaucer never intended, or of arguing from pieces which he never wrote, as if they were his. We muſt not infer from his repeated commendations of the Dayſie-flower, that he was ſpecially favoured by Margaret, Counteſs of Pembroke [n]; and ſtill leſs ſhould we ſet him down as a *follower* of Alain Chartier [o], becauſe his

[n] I can find no other foundation for this notion. Mr. Speght, who firſt ſtarted it, ſays, that "it may appeare in divers treatiſes by him written: as *in the Prologue of the Legend of good Women* under the name of the Dayſie; and likewiſe *in a Ballad*, beginning, *In the ſeaſon of Feverier*." The Ballad is among the additions made by John Stowe to Chaucer's works in 1561, and, like the greateſt part of thoſe additions, is *of very dubious authority*, to uſe the gentleſt terms. But ſuppoſing it genuine, there is nothing in it to make us believe that it had any reference to the Counteſs of Pembroke. That its commendations of the Dayſie ought not to weigh with us is very plain from the other piece cited by Mr. Speght: for the *Legende of good Women*, in which he imagines "the Lady Margaret to be honoured under the name of the Dayſie," was certainly not written till at leaſt twelve years after that Lady's death. See the Diſcourſe, &c. n. 3. for the date of the *Legende*. The Counteſs *Margaret* muſt have died not later than 1370, as the Earl's ſon, by his ſecond wife *Anne*, was about nineteen years of age, when he was killed in a tournament in 1391. Hollinſhed, p. 471. It is poſſible that *le dit de la fleur de lis et de la Marguerite* by *Guillaume de Machaut* [Acad. des Inſc. t. xx. p. 381.] and the *Dittié de la flour de la Margherite* by *Froiſſart* [Ibid. t. x. p. 669. t. xiv. hiſt. p. 223.], (neither of which had the leaſt relation to the Counteſs of Pembroke,) might furniſh us with the true key to thoſe myſtical compliments, which our poet has paid to the Dayſie-flower.

[o] Leland was the firſt author of this ſtory, which is totally inconſiſtent with Chronology. The time of Alain's birth has not been ſettled with preciſion; but he was certainly living near 50 years after Chaucer's death; which makes it morally impoſſible that the latter ſhould have *followed* him, in his attempts to poliſh his native language. *La Balade de Fongieres* [Œuvres d'Alain Chartier, p. 717.] was written upon the taking of that place by the Engliſh in 1448. There is another piece attributed to Alain [Ibid. p. 779.], which is thus entitled, *Complainte faite à Paris et préſentée à ſa dame l'an mil quatre cents cinquante deux*. Inſtead therefore of ſuppoſing from the tranſlation of *La belle dame ſans mercie* that Chaucer imitated Alain Chartier, we ſhould rather conclude, that he was not the author of that tranſlation; which indeed in Ms. *Harl.* 372. is expreſsly attributed to a *Sir Richard Ros*.

I will juſt take notice of another opinion, (which has been propagated upon as little founda-

his Editors have falſely aſcribed to him a tranſlation of one of Alain's poems.

foundation,) that Chaucer imitated the Provençal poets. Mr. Rymer, who, I believe, firſt made the diſcovery, ſpeaks only of his having borrowed from their *language* [View of Trag. p. 78.], but Mr. Dryden found out, that he compoſed *after their manner*, particularly his tale of *the Flower and the Leaf*. Pref. to Fables. Mr. Warton alſo thinks, that *the Houſe of Fame* "was originally a Provencial compoſition." Hiſt. of Eng. Po. p. 389. 458.

How far Chaucer's *language* was borrowed, has been conſidered already, in the Eſſay, &c. Part i. I will only add here, that I have not obſerved in any of his writings a ſingle phraſe or word, which has the leaſt appearance of having been fetched by him from the South of the Loire. With reſpect to the *manner* and *matter* of his compoſitions, till ſome clear inſtance of imitation be produced, I ſhall be ſlow to believe that in either he ever copied the poets of Provence, with whoſe works, I apprehend, he had very little, if any, acquaintance.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION

OF

CHAUCER.

CHANGE

OF

LANGUAGE AND REPUTATION

ON THE

ESSAY

THE CONTENTS.

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PART THE THIRD.

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AN

ESSAY

ON THE

LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION

OF

CHAUCER.

THE Language of Chaucer has undergone two very different judgements. According to one [1], he is the "well of Engliſh undefiled;" according to the other [2], he has corrupted and deformed the Engliſh idiom by an immoderate

[1] Spenſer, F. Q. b. IV. c. ii. ſt. 32.

[2] Verſtegan, c. 7. "Some few ages after [the Conqueſt] came the Poet Geffery Chaucer, who writing his poeſies in Engliſh is of ſome called the firſt illuminator of the Engliſh tongue. Of their opinion I am not, though I reverence Chaucer as an excellent Poet for his time. He was indeed *a great mingler of Engliſh with* FRENCH, unto which language (by like for that he was deſcended of French, or rather Wallon race) he carried a great affection."

Skinner, Etymol. L. A. Præf. "Ex hoc maleſano novitatis pruritu, Belgæ Gallicas voces paſſim civitate ſua donando patrii ſermonis puritatem nuper non leviter inquinârunt, et CHAUCERUS poeta, peſſimo exemplo, *integris vocum plauſtris ex eadem* GALLIA *in noſtram linguam invectis*, eam, nimis antea a Normannorum victoria adulteratam, omni fere nativa gratia et nitore ſpoliavit."

moderate mixture of French words. Nor do the opinions with reſpect to his Verſification ſeem to have been leſs diſcordant. His contemporaries [3], and they who lived neareſt to his time, univerſally extoll him as the "chief Poete of Britaine." the flour of Poetes," &c. titles, which muſt be ſuppoſed to implie their admiration of his metrical ſkill, as well as of his other poetical talents; but the later critics [4], though they leave him in poſſeſſion of the ſame ſounding titles, yet they are almoſt unanimouſly agreed, that he was either totally ignorant or negligent of metrical rules, and that his verſes, if they may be ſo called, are frequently deficient, by a ſyllable or two, of their juſt meaſure.

It is the purpoſe of the following Eſſay to throw ſome light upon both theſe queſtions. Admitting the fact, that the Engliſh of Chaucer has a great mixture of French in it, I hope to ſhew, that this mixture, if a crime, cannot fairly be laid to his charge. I ſhall then proceed to ſtate ſome obſervations upon the moſt material peculiarities of the Norman-Saxon, or Engliſh Language, as it appears to have been in general uſe in the age of Chaucer; and laſtly, applying theſe obſervations to the poetical parts

[3] Lydgate, Occleve, et al. See the Teſtimonies prefixed to Urry's Edit.

[4] I ſhall only quote Dryden, Pref. to his Fables. "The verſe of Chaucer, I confeſs, is not harmonious to us;—They who lived with him, and ſome time after him, thought it muſical; and it continues ſo even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lidgate and Gower, his contemporaries:—'Tis true, I cannot go ſo far as he, who publiſhed the laſt edition of him [Mr. Speght]; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten ſyllables in a verſe where we find but nine. But this opinion is not worth confuting; 'tis ſo groſs and obvious an error, that common ſenſe (which is a rule in every thing but matters of Faith and Revelation) muſt convince the Reader, that equality of numbers in every verſe which we call *Heroick*, was either not known, or not always practiſed, in Chaucer's age. It were an eaſy matter to produce ſome thouſands of his verſes, which are lame for want of half a foot, and ſometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwiſe."

This peremptory deciſion has never ſince, that I know, been controverted, except by Mr. Urry, whoſe deſign of reſtoring the metre of Chaucer by a Collation of Mss. was as laudable, as his execution of it has certainly been unſucceſsful.

parts of the Canterbury Tales, as they are faithfully printed in this edition from the beſt Mss. which I coud procure, I ſhall leave it to the intelligent Reader to determine, whether Chaucer was really ignorant of the laws, or even of the graces, of Verſification, and whether he was more negligent of either than the very early Poets in almoſt all languages are found to have been.

PART THE FIRST.

§ 1. In order to judge, in the firſt place, how far Chaucer ought to be charged as the importer of the many French words and phraſes, which are ſo viſible in all his writings, it will be neceſſary to take a ſhort view of the early introduction and long prevalency of the French language in this country before his time. It might be ſufficient, perhaps, for our purpoſe to begin this view at the Conqueſt: but I cannot help obſerving, from a contemporary Hiſtorian, that, ſeveral years before that great event, the language of France had been introduced into the court of England, and from thence among the people. The account which Ingulphus gives of this matter is [5], that Edward, commonly called the Confeſſor, having been educated at the court of his uncle Duke Richard II. and having reſided in Normandy many years, became *almoſt a Frenchman*. Upon his return from thence and acceſſion to the throne of England in 1043, he brought over with

[5] Ingulph. Hiſt. Croyl. p. 62. ed. Gale. "*Rex autem Edwardus natus in Anglia, ſed nutritus in Normannia et diutiſſime immoratus,* pene in Gallicum tranſierat, *adducens ac attrahens de Normannia plurimos, quos variis dignitatibus promotos in immenſum exaltabat.—Cœpit ergo tota terra ſub Rege et ſub aliis Normannis introductis Anglicos ritus dimittere, et Francorum mores in multis imitari,* Gallicum [ſcilicet] idioma omnes Magnates in ſuis curiis tanquam magnum gentilitium loqui, *chartas et chirographa ſua more Francorum conficere, et propriam conſuetudinem in his et in aliis multis erubeſcere.*"

with him a number of Normans, whom he promoted to the higheſt dignities; and, according to Ingulphus, under the influence of the King and his Norman favourites, the whole nation began to lay aſide their Engliſh faſhions and imitate the manners of the French in many things. In particular, he ſays expreſsly, that *all the Nobility in their courts began to ſpeak French, as a great piece of gentility.*

§ 11. This faſhion however of ſpeaking French, having been adopted only in compliance with the caprice of the reigning prince, would not probably have ſpread very wide or laſted very long; but at the Revolution, which followed ſoon after in 1066, the language of the Norman conqueror was interwoven with the new political ſyſtem [6], and the ſeveral eſtabliſhments, which were made for the ſupport and ſecurity of the one, all contributed, in a greater or leſs degree, to the diffuſion and permanency of the other.

§ 111. To begin with the court. If we conſider that the King himſelf, the chief officers of ſtate, and by far the greateſt part of the nobility, were all Normans, and coud probably ſpeak no language but their own, we can have no doubt that French [7] was the ordinary language of the court. The few

[6] Robert Holkot (as quoted by Selden, *ad Eadmer.* p. 189.) ſays, that the Conquerour—"*deliberavit quomodo linguam Saxonicam poſſet deſtruere, et Angliam et Normanniam in idio-*"*mate concordare.*"—But Holkot wrote only in the fourteenth century, and I do not find that the earlier hiſtorians impute to the King ſo ſilly a project. On the contrary Ordericus Vitalis, l. iv. p. 520, aſſures us that William—"*Anglicam locutionem plerumque ſategit* "*ediſcere: ut ſine interprete querelam ſubjectæ legis poſſet intelligere, et ſcita rectitudinis uni-*"*cuique (prout ratio dictaret) affectuoſe depromere. Aſt a perceptione hujuſmodi durior ætas* "*illum compeſcebat, et tumultus multimodarum occupationum ad alia neceſſario adtrahebat.*"—And ſeveral of his publick inſtruments, which are ſtill extant in Saxon, [Hickes G. A. S. p. 164.—Præf. p. xv, xvi.] prove that he had no objection to uſing that language in buſineſs; ſo that it ſeems more natural to ſuppoſe, that the introduction of the French language was a conſequence only, and not an object, of his policy.

[7] I apprehend that long before this time the Daniſh tongue had ceaſed to be ſpoken in Normandy.

few Saxons, who for ſome time [8] were admitted there, muſt have had the ſtrongeſt inducements to acquire the ſame language as ſoon as poſſible, not merely for the ſake of apprehending and anſwering inſignificant queſtions in the circle, but becauſe in that age affairs of the greateſt importance were publickly tranſacted in the King's court, and there they might be called upon to anſwer for their poſſeſſions and even for their lives. In an eccleſiaſtical ſynod, held in the preſence of the King in 1072, the venerable Biſhop of Worceſter, Wulſtan, (whoſe *holy ſimplicity*, as the [9] Hiſtorian calls

Normandy. It was never general there, as appears from a paſſage of Dudon, l. iii. p. 112. Duke William I. gives this reaſon for ſending his ſon Richard to be educated at Baieux. "*Quoniam quidem* Rotomagenſis *civitas* Romanâ *potius quam* Daciſcâ *utitur eloquentiâ, et* Bajocacenſis *fruitur frequentius* Daciſcâ *linguâ quam* Romanâ, *volo igitur ut ad* Bajocacenſia *deferatur quantocius mœnia*, &c." If we recollect, that the Daniſh ſettlers under Rollo were few in compariſon with the original inhabitants, and had probably ſcarce any uſe of letters among them, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed that they did not preſerve their language for above two or three generations.

From two other paſſages of the ſame Dudon we learn, that the Daniſh language, while it laſted in Normandy, was very ſimilar to the Saxon [p. 99.], and yet different from it [p. 100.]; *qualem decet eſſe ſororem*.

[8] After the death of Edwin, and the impriſonment of Morcar in 1070, we do not read of any Saxon Earl, except Waltheof, and he was executed for miſpriſion of treaſon about three years after. *Orderic. Vit.* l. iv. p. 536. It is ſingular, that Waltheof, according to the Saxon law, ſuffered death for the concealment of that treaſon, for which Roger de Breteuil, Earl of Hereford, being tried *ſecundum leges Normannorum*, coud only be puniſhed by a forfeiture of his inheritance and perpetual impriſonment. *Id.* p. 535. From this time (ſays Ingulphus, p. 70.) *Comitatus et Baronias, Epiſcopatus et Prælatias, totius terræ ſuis Normannis Rex diſtribuit, et vix aliquem Anglicum ad honoris ſtatum vel alicujus dominii principatum aſcendere permiſit.*

[9] Will. Malmeſb. l. iii. p. 118. *Hic ſancta ſimplicitas beati Vulſtani* &c. The ſtory which follows perfectly juſtifies this character. Matt. Paris, ad an. 1095, ſays that in another Synod there was a formal deſign of depoſing Wulſtan, and that he was ſaved only by a miracle. He was accuſed "*ſimplicitatis et illiteraturæ*;"—"*et quaſi homo idiota*, qui linguam Gallicanam non noverat, nec regiis conſiliis intereſſe poterat, *ipſo Rege conſentiente et hoc dictante, decernitur deponendus.*"

calls it, ſeems to have preſerved him from the degradation which almoſt all the other Engliſh Prelates underwent) was obliged to defend the rights of his ſee by an interpreter, *a monk* (according to the ſame [10] Hiſtorian) *of very little eloquence, but who had a ſmattering of the* Norman *language.*

§ IV. If we conſider further, that the great Barons, to whom William [11] diſtributed a large ſhare of his conqueſt, when releaſed from their attendance in the King's court, retired to courts of their own, where they in their turn were ſurrounded by a numerous train of vaſſals, chiefly their own countrymen, we may be ſure that the French language travelled with them into the moſt diſtant provinces, and was uſed by them, not only in their common converſation, but in their civil contracts, their judicial proceedings, and even in the promulgation of their [12] laws. The many Caſtles, which William built [13] in different parts of the iſland, muſt alſo have contributed

[10] Ibid. *Ita datâ benedictione Monacho, minimæ facundiæ viro, ſed Normannicæ linguæ* ſciolo, *rem perorans obtinuit.*

[11] There is a curious detail of part of this diſtribution in Ordericus Vitalis, l. iv. p. 521, 2. which concludes thus :—" *aliiſque advenis, qui ſibi cohæſerant, magnos et multos honores contulit; et in tantum quoſdam provexit, ut multos in Angliâ ditiores et potentiores haberent clientes, quam eorum in Neuſtriâ fuerant parentes.*" There is an account in the Monaſt. Angl. t. i. p. 400. of the Conquerour's giving the whole county of Cumberland to Ranulph de Meſchines, and of the diviſion which Ranulph made of it among his relations and followers, who appear to have been all foreigners.

[12] The antient Earls had a power of legiſlation within their Counties. William of Malmeſbury, ſpeaking of William Fitz-Oſberne, Earl of Hereford, ſays; " *Manet in hunc diem in Comitatu ejus apud Herefordum legum quas ſtatuit inconcuſſa firmitas; ut nullus miles pro qualicunque commiſſo plus ſeptem ſolidis ſolvat; cum in aliis provinciis ob parvam occaſiunculam in tranſgreſſione præcepti herilis, viginti vel viginti quinque pendantur.*" Lib. iii.p. 105.

[13] Ordericus Vitalis, l. iv. p. 511. obſerves, that before the conqueſt, " *Munitiones, quas Caſtella Galli nuncupant, Anglicis provinciis pauciſſimæ fuerant: et ob hoc Angli, licet bellicoſi fuerint et audaces, ad reſiſtendum tamen inimicis extiterant debiliores.*" William, at his

contributed very much to the propagation of the French language among the natives, as it is probable that the Foreigners, of whom the garriſons were [14] entirely compoſed, would inſiſt upon carrying on all their tranſactions with the neighbouring country in their own language.

§ v. But the great alteration, which, from political motives, was made in the ſtate of the clergy at that time, muſt have operated perhaps more efficaciouſly than any other cauſe to give the French language a deep root in England. The Conquerour ſeems to have been fully apprized of the ſtrength which the new government might derive from a Clergy more cloſely attached to himſelf by a community of intereſts than the native Engliſh were likely to be. Accordingly, from the very beginning of his reign, all eccleſiaſtical preferments, as faſt as they became vacant, were given to his Norman chaplains; and, not content to avail himſelf of the ordinary courſe of ſucceſſion, he contrived [15], upon various charges of real or

his landing, placed garriſons at *Pevenſey* and *Haſtings*, After the battle, he took poſſeſſion of *Dover*, and left a garriſon there. He cauſed "*firmamenta quædam*" to be made at *London*, and built a ſtrong citadel at *Wincheſter*. Upon his return from Normandy, after the firſt inſurrection of the Engliſh, he built a caſtle within the city of *Exeter*; another at *Warwick*; and another at *Nottingham*. In the city of *York*, "*munitionem firmavit, quam delectis militibus cuſtodiendam tradidit.*" At *Lincoln*, *Huntingdon*, and *Cambridge*, "*caſtra locavit, et tutelam eorum fortiſſimis viris commendavit.*" He had alſo garriſons at *Montacute* in Somerſetſhire, and at *Shrewſbury*. He built fortifications at *Cheſter* and *Stafford*. We read alſo of caſtles at *Arundel* and *Stuteſbury* at this time; and *Norwich* was ſo ſtrong as to ſtand a ſiege of three months. *Ord. Vit.* p. 500—535.

[14] Orderic. Vital. l. iv. p. 506. *Cuſtodes in caſtellis ſtrenuos viros* ex Gallis *collocavit, et opulenta beneficia, pro quibus labores et pericula libenter tolerarent, diſtribuit.*

[15] See the tranſactions of the Council held at *Wincheſter* in the year 1070, ap. Flor. Vigorn. p. 636. Having ſpoken of the degradation of Stigand, Archbiſhop of Canterbury, and Agelmar, Biſhop of the Eaſt Saxons, he proceeds thus: *Abbates etiam aliqui ibi degradati ſunt, operam dante rege ut quamplures ex Anglis ſuo honore privarentur*, in quorum locum ſuæ gentis perſonas ſubrogavit, ob confirmationem ſui (quod noviter acquiſierat) regni. *Hic et nonnullos, tam epiſcopos quam Abbates*, quos nulla evidenti cauſa nec concilia nec leges

or pretended irregularities, to remove ſeveral of the Engliſh Biſhops and Abbots, whoſe places were in like manner immediately ſupplied by Foreigners. In ſhort, in the ſpace of a very few years, all the Sees of England were filled with Normans, or ſtrangers naturalized, if I may ſo ſay, in Normandy, and the greateſt part of the Abbeys in the kingdom were under governours of the ſame deſcription.

§ VI. It muſt be allowed, that the confeſſed ſuperiority [16] in literature of the Norman clergy over the Engliſh at that time furniſhed the King with a ſpecious pretext for theſe promotions; and it is probable, that the Prelates, who were thus promoted, made uſe of the ſame pretext to juſtify themſelves

leges ſeculi damnabant, *ſuis honoribus privavit, et uſque ad finem vitæ cuſtodiæ mancipatos detinuit, ſuſpicione, ut diximus, tantum inductus novi regni.*

In confirmation of what is ſaid here and in the text, if we examine the ſubſcriptions to an Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution in 1072, ap. Will. Malm. l. iii. p. 117. we find that the two Archbiſhops, ſeven Biſhops out of eleven, and ſix Abbots out of twelve, were Foreigners: and in about five years more the four other Biſhopricks, and five at leaſt of the other ſix Abbeys, were in the hands of Foreigners.

Another Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution made at this time has very much the appearance of a political regulation. It orders "that the Biſhops ſeats ſhall be removed from towns to cities;" and in conſequence of it the See of Lichefield was removed to Cheſter; that of Seleſey to Chicheſter; that of Elmham to Thetford, and afterwards to Norwich; that of Shireburne to Saliſbury, and that of Dorcheſter to Lincoln. *Will. Malm.* l. iii. p. 118. When the King had got a ſet of Biſhops to his mind, he would wiſh to have them placed, where their influence coud be of moſt ſervice to him.

[16] Ordericus Vitalis, l. iv. p. 518. ſays, that the Normans at the Conqueſt found the Engliſh "*agreſtes et pene illiteratos*;" and he imputes, with ſome probability, the decay of learning among them, from the time of Beda and others, to the continual ravages and oppreſſions of the Danes. See alſo William of Malmeſbury, l. iii. p. 101, 2. It may be obſerved too, from Continuat. Hiſt. Croyland, by Peter of Blois, p. 114. that the firſt regular lectures (of which we have any account) at Cambridge were read there by four foreign Monks, who had come over into England with Jeffrey, Abbot of Croyland, formerly Prior of St. Evroul. They are ſaid to have read "*diverſis in locis a ſe diviſi et formam Aurelianenſis ſtudii ſecuti,*" three of them in Grammar, Logick, and Rhetorick, and the fourth in Theology.

themſelves in diſpoſing of all their beſt benefices among their friends and countrymen. That this was their conſtant practice is certain. Nor were the new Abbots leſs induſtrious to ſtock their convents [17] with Foreigners, whom they invited over from the continent, partly perhaps for the pleaſure of their ſociety, and partly, as we may ſuppoſe, in expectation of their ſupport againſt the cabals of the Engliſh monks. And when the great Barons, following the royal example, applied themſelves to make their peace with the Church by giving her a ſhare of their plunder, it was their uſual cuſtom to begin their religious eſtabliſhments with a colony [18] from ſome Norman Monaſtery.

§ VII. In this ſtate of things, which ſeems to have continued [19] with little

[17] See the preceding note. There was no great harmony at firſt between the Engliſh monks and their new governours. See the proceedings at Glaſtonbury under Thurſtin [Will. Malm. l. iii. p. 110], and at Canterbury againſt Wido. [Chron. Saxon. p. 179, 180. ed. Gibſon.]

[18] The Conquerour had put Goiſbert, a monk of Marmontier, at the head of his new foundation of Battle Abbey. *Ord. Vital.* l. iv. p. 505. In like manner Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewſbury, ſent for Monks from Sées to begin his Abbey at Shrewſbury. *Id.* l. v. p. 581. Walter Eſpec alſo brought over Monks of Clervaulx to fill his two Abbeys, of Rivaulx and Wardun. *Ailr. Rievall. ap. X Script.* p. 338.

Beſide theſe and many other independent foundations, which were in this manner opened for the reception of foreign Monks in preference to the natives, a conſiderable number of Religious Houſes were built and endowed, as cells to different monaſteries abroad; and as ſuch were conſtantly filled by detachments from the ſuperiour ſociety. They are frequently mentioned in our hiſtories under the general name of the *Alien Priories*; and though ſeveral of them, upon various pretexts, had withdrawn themſelves from their foreign connexions and been made denizens, no leſs than one hundred and forty remained in 1414, which were then all ſuppreſſed and their revenues veſted in the crown. See the Liſt. Monaſt. Angl. v. i. p. 1035.

[19] I ſuppoſe that, during this whole period of above 250 years, the Engliſh language was continually gaining ground, by ſlow and almoſt imperceptible degrees, in proportion nearly as the Engliſh natives were emerging from that ſtate of depreſſion in which they were placed by the Conqueſt. We have no reaſon to believe that much progreſs was made in either

little variation to the time of Edward III. it is probable, that the French and Engliſh languages ſubſiſted together throughout the kingdom; the higher

either of theſe matters before the reign of King John. The loſs of Normandy &c. in that reign, and the conſequent regulations of Henry III. and Louis IX. by which the ſubjects of either crown were made incapable of holding lands in the dominions of the other [Matth. Paris, ad an. 1244], muſt have greatly diminiſhed the uſual conflux of Normans to the Engliſh court; and the inteſtine commotions in this country under John and Henry III. in which ſo many of the greater Barons loſt their lives and eſtates, muſt eventually have opened a way for the Engliſh to raiſe themſelves to honours and poſſeſſions, to which they had very rarely before been admitted to aſpire.

In the year 1258, the 42 Henry III. we have a particular inſtance (the firſt, I believe, of the kind) of attention on the ſide of government to the Engliſh part of the community. The Letters Patent, which the King was adviſed to publiſh in ſupport of the Oxford Proviſions, were ſent to each County in Latin, French, and Engliſh. [Annal. Burton. p. 416. One of them has been printed from the Patent-roll, 43 H. III. n. 40. m. 15. by Somner in his Dict. Sax. v. UNNAN, and by Hearne, Text. Roff. p. 391.] At the ſame time all the proceedings in the buſineſs of the Proviſions appear to have been carried on in French, and the principal perſons in both parties are evidently of foreign extraction.

If a conjecture may be allowed in a matter ſo little capable of proof, I ſhould think it probable, that the neceſſity, which the great Barons were under at this time, of engaging the body of the people to ſupport them in their oppoſition to a new ſet of foreigners, chiefly Poitevins, contributed very much to aboliſh the invidious diſtinctions which had long ſubſiſted between the French and Engliſh parts of the nation. In the early times after the Conqueſt, if we may believe Henry of Huntingdon [L. vi. p. 370.] "to be called an Engliſhman was a reproach:" but when the Clares, the Bohuns, the Bigods, &c. were raiſing armies for the expulſion of Foreigners out of the kingdom, they would not probably be unwilling to have themſelves conſidered as natives of England. Accordingly Matthew Paris [p. 833.] calls Hugh Bigod (a brother of the Earl Marſhall) *virum de terra Anglorum naturalem et ingenuum*; and in another paſſage [p. 851.] he appropriates the title of "*alienigenæ*" to thoſe foreigners, "*qui Reginæ attinentes per eam introducti fuerant in Angliam:*" and ſo perhaps the word ought generally to be underſtood in the tranſactions of that reign. None but perſons born out of England were then eſteemed as Foreigners.

About the ſame time we find an Archbiſhop of York objecting to Clerks (recommended to benefices by the Pope), becauſe they were "ignorant of the Engliſh language" [Mat. Par. p. 831.]; which ſeems to imply, that a knowledge of that language was then conſidered among the proper qualifications of an Eccleſiaſtick: but that it was not neceſſarily required,

higher orders, both of the Clergy and Laity [20], ſpeaking almoſt univerſally French, the lower retaining the uſe of their native tongue, but alſo frequently

required, even in the Parochial Clergy, appears from the great number of foreign Parſons, Vicars, &c. who had the King's Letters of protection in the 25th year of Edward I. See the Liſts in Prynne, t. i. p. 709—720.

[20] The teſtimony of Robert of Glouceſter (who lived in the times of H. III. and E. I.) is ſo full and preciſe to this point, that I truſt the Reader will not be diſpleaſed to ſee it in his own words, or rather in the words of that very incorrect Ms. which Hearne has religiouſly followed in his edition.

Rob. Glouc. p. 364.

Thus come lo! Engelond into Normannes honde.
And the Normans ne couthe ſpeke tho [a] *bote her owe* ſpeche,
And ſpeke Frenche as [b] *dude atom*, and here chyldren dude al ſo teche.
So that hey men of thys lond, that of her blod come,
Holdeth alle thulke ſpeche, that hii of hem nome.
[c] *Vor bote* a man couthe French, [d] *me tolth* of hym wel *lute*;
[e] *Ac* lowe men holdeth to Englyſs and to her *kunde* ſpeche [f] *yute*.
Ich wene ther ne be man in world contreyes none,
That ne holdeth to her kunde ſpeche, bote Engelond one.
Ac wel me wot vor to conne bothe wel yt ys,
Vor the more that a man con, the more worth he ys.

I ſhall throw together here a few miſcellaneous facts in confirmation of this general teſtimony of Robert of Glouceſter.

A letter of Hugh, Biſhop of Coventry, preſerved by Hoveden [p. 704.] aſſures us, that William, Biſhop of Ely, Chancellor and Prime Miniſter to Richard I. "*linguam Anglicanam prorſus ignorabat.*"

In the reign of Henry III. Robert of Glouceſter, intending, as it ſhould ſeem, to give the very words of Peter, Biſhop of Hereford (whom he has juſt called "a Freinſs biſhop)," makes him ſpeak thus.—"*Par Criſt*," he ſede, "*Sir Tomas, tu is maveis. Meint ben te ay fet.*" Rob. Glouc. p. 537.

There is a more pleaſant inſtance of the familiar uſe of the French language by a biſhop, as late as the time of Edward II. Louis, conſecrated Biſhop of Durham in 1318, was unfortunately very illiterate—"laicus; Latinum non intelligens, ſed cum difficultate pronun-

[a] *But their own.*
[b] *Did at home,*
[c] *For but* ———
[d] *Men told.—lite,* little.
[e] *But kinde,* natural.
[f] *Yet.*

"cians.

quently adding to it a knowledge of the other. The general inducements which the Engliſh had to acquire the French language have been touched upon above; to which muſt be added, that the children, who were put to learn Latin, were under a neceſſity of learning French at the ſame time, as it was the conſtant practice in all ſchools, from the Conqueſt [21] till about

" cians. Unde, cum in conſecratione ſuâ profiteri debuit, quamvis per multos dies ante in-
" ſtructorem habuiſſet, legere neſcivit: et cum, auriculantibus [f. articulantibus] aliis, cum
" difficultate ad illud verbum *metropoliticæ* perveniſſet, et diu anhelans pronunciare non poſ-
" ſet, dixit in Gallico; *Seit pur dite.*—Et cum ſimiliter celebraret ordines, nec illud ver-
" bum *in ænigmate* proferre poſſet, dixit circumſtantibus; *Par Seint Lowys, il ne fu pas*
" *curteis, qui ceſte parole ici eſcrit.*" Hiſt. Dunelm. ap Wharton, Ang. Sac. t. i. p. 761.

The tranſactions at Norham, in 1291, the 20 Ed. I. with reſpect to the Scottiſh Succeſſion, appear to have been almoſt wholly carried on in French, for which it is difficult to account but by ſuppoſing that language to have been the language of the Court in both nations. See the Roll de Superior. Reg. Angl. in Prynne, t. i. p. 487, et ſeq. Edward's claim of the Superiority is firſt made by Sir Roger Brabanſon *Sermone Gallico*; and afterwards the Biſhop of Bath and Wells, and the King himſelf, ſpeak to the aſſembly of Engliſh and Scots in the ſame language. Ibid. p. 499. 501.

The anſwers of the Biſhop of Durham to the Pope's Nuncioes *in Gallico* [Walt. Hemingf. ad an. 1295.] may be ſuppoſed to have been out of complaiſance to the Cardinals, (though, by the way, they do not appear to have been Frenchmen;) but no ſuch conſtruction can be put upon the following fact related by Matthew of Weſtminſter [ad an. 1301. p. 438.] The Archbiſhop of Canterbury informs the Pope, that he had preſented his Holineſſes letters to the King in a full court, " *quas ipſe dominus rex reverenter recipiens, eas publice legi coram omnibus*, et in Gallicâ linguâ fecerat patenter exponi."

[21] Ingulphus, a contemporary writer, informs us that this practice began at the Conqueſt. p. 71. " *Ipſum etiam idioma* [Anglicum] *tantum abhorrebant* [Normanni], *quod leges ter-*
" *ræ ſtatutaque Anglicorum regum linguâ Gallicâ tractarentur*; et pueris etiam in ſcholis
" principia literarum grammatica Gallice ac non Anglice traderentur; *modus etiam ſcribendi*
" *Anglicus omitteretur, et modus Gallicus in chartis et in libris omnibus admitteretur.*"—And Treviſa, the tranſlator and augmenter of Higden's Polychronicon in the reign of Richard II. gives us a very particular account of its beginning to be diſuſed within his own memory. The two paſſages of Higden and Treviſa throw ſo much light upon the ſubject of our preſent enquiry, that I ſhall inſert them both at length, from Ms. *Harl.* 1900. as being more correct in ſeveral places than the Ms. from which Dr. Hickes formerly printed them in his Præf. ad Theſ. Ling. Septent. p. xvii.

HIGDEN'S

about the reign of Edward III. to make the ſcholars conſtrue their Latin leſſons into French. From the diſcontinuance of this practice, as well as from other cauſes, the uſe and, probably, the knowledge of French, as a ſeparate language, received a conſiderable check. In the 36th year of Edward III. a law [22] was made, "that all pleas, in the courts of the King or of

HIGDEN'S *Polychron.* b. i. c. lix. This apayringe of the birthe tonge is by cauſe of tweye thinges: oon is for children in ſcole, azenes the uſage and maner of alle other naciouns, beth compelled for to leve her owne langage, and for to conſtrewe her leſſouns and her thingis a Frenſche, and haveth ſiththe that the Normans come firſt into England. Alſo gentil mennes children beth ytauzt for to ſpeke Frenſche, from the tyme that thei beth rokked in her cradel, and kunneth ſpeke and playe with a childes brooche. And uplondiſh men wole likne hem ſelf to gentil men, and fondeth with grete biſyneſſe for to ſpeke Frenſche, for to be the more ytold of.

TREVISA. This maner was myche yuſed to fore the firſt moreyn, and is ſiththe ſom del ychaungide. For John Cornwaile, a maiſtre of grammer, chaungide the lore in grammer ſcole and conſtruction of Frenſch into Engliſch, and Richard Pencriche lerned that maner teching of him, and other men of Pencriche. So that now, the zere of oure lord a thouſand thre hundred foure ſcore and fyve, of the ſecunde king Rychard after the Conqueſt nyne, in alle the gramer ſcoles of Englond children leveth Frenſch, and conſtrueth and lerneth an Engliſch, and haveth therby avauntage in oon ſide and deſavauntage in another. Her avauntage is, that thei lerneth her grammer in laſſe tyme than children were wont to do. Deſavauntage is, that now children of grammer ſcole kunneth no more Frenſch than can her lifte heele. And that is harm for hem, and thei ſchul paſſe the ſee and travaile in ſtrange londes, and in many other places alſo. Alſo gentel men haveth now mych yleſte for to teche her children Frenſch.

[22] This celebrated ſtatute is ſaid by Walſingham [p. 179.] to have been made "*ad petitionem Communitatis*;" but no ſuch petition appears upon the Parliament-roll: and it ſeems rather to have been an Act of Grace, moving from the King, who on the ſame day entered into the fiftieth year of his age; "*unde in ſuo Jubileo populo ſuo ſe exhibuit gratioſum.*" Walſing. ibid. It is remarkable too, that the cauſe of ſummons at the beginning of this Parliament was declared by Sir Henry Greene, Chief Juſtice, *en Engleis* (ſays the Record for the firſt time): and the ſame Entry is repeated in the Records of the Parliaments 37 and 38 Edw. III. but not in thoſe of 40 Edw. III. or of any later Parliament; either becauſe the cuſtom of opening the cauſe of ſummons in French was reſtored again after that ſhort interval, or, perhaps, becauſe the new practice of opening it in Engliſh

of any other Lord, ſhall be pleaded and judged in the Engliſh tongue," and the preamble recites, " *that the French tongue* (in which they had been uſually pleaded, &c.) *was too much unknown,*" or diſuſed; and yet, for near threeſcore years after this [23] the proceedings in Parliament, with very few exceptions, appear to have been all in French, and the ſtatutes continued

was ſo well eſtabliſhed, in the opinion of the Clerk, as not to need being marked by a ſpecial Entry.

The reaſons aſſigned, in the preamble to this Statute, for having Pleas and Judgements in the Engliſh tongue, might all have been urged, with at leaſt equal force, for having the Laws themſelves in that language. But the times were not yet ripe for that innovation. The Engliſh ſcale was clearly beginning to preponderate, but the ſlowneſs of its motion proves that it had a great weight to overcome.

[23] All the Parliamentary proceedings in Engliſh before 1422, the firſt of Henry VI. are the few which follow.

The Confeſſion of Thomas Duke of Glouceſter, taken at Calais by William Rickhill and recorded in Parliament, *inter Plac. Coron.* 21 Ric. II. n. 9. It is printed in Tyrrell, v. iii. p. 793.

Some paſſages in the Depoſition of Richard II. printed at the end of Knighton, int. X Scriptores.

The ordinance between William Lord the Roos and Robert Tirwhitt, Juſtice of the King's Bench. 13 Hen. IV. n. 13.

A Petition of the Commons with the King's anſwer. 2 Hen. V. n. 22.

A Proviſo in Engliſh inſerted into a French grant of a Diſme and Quinziſme. 9 Hen. V. n. 10.

At the beginning of the reign of Henry VI. the two languages ſeem to have been uſed indifferently. The Subſidy of Wolle, &c. was granted in Engliſh. 1 Hen. VI. n. 19. A Proviſo in French was added by the Commons to the Articles for the Council of Regency, which are in Engliſh. Ibid. n. 33. Even the Royal Aſſent was given to Bills in Engliſh. 2 Hen. VI. and n. 54. Be it ordeined as it is aſked. Be it as it is axed.—and again, n. 55.

I have ſtated this matter ſo particularly, in order to ſhew, that when the French language ceaſed to be generally underſtood, it was gradually diſuſed in Parliamentary proceedings; and from thence, I think, we may fairly infer, that while it was uſed in thoſe proceedings, conſtantly and excluſively of the Engliſh, it muſt have been very generally underſtood.

tinued to be publiſhed in the ſame language, for above one hundred and twenty years, till the firſt of Richard III.

§ VIII. From what has been ſaid I think we may fairly conclude, that the Engliſh language muſt have imbibed a ſtrong tincture of the French, long before the age of Chaucer, and conſequently that he ought not to be charged as the importer of words and phraſes, which he only uſed after the example of his predeceſſors and in common with his contemporaries. This was the real fact, and is capable of being demonſtrated to any one, who will take the trouble of comparing the writings of Chaucer with thoſe of [24] Robert of Glouceſter and Robert of Brunne, who both lived before him, and with thoſe of Sir John Mandeville and Wicliff, who lived at the ſame time with him. If we coud for a moment ſuppoſe the contrary; if we coud ſuppoſe that the Engliſh idiom, in the age of Chaucer, remained pure and unmixed, as it was ſpoken in the courts of Alfred or Egbert,

[24] Robert of Glouceſter's Chronicle has been publiſhed by Hearne, Oxf. 1724, faithfully, I dare ſay, but from incorrect Mss. The author ſpeaks of himſelf [p. 560.] as living at the time of the Battle of Eveſham in 1265; and from another paſſage [p. 224.] he ſeems to have lived beyond the year 1278, though his hiſtory ends in 1270. See Hearne's Pref. p. lxviii.

Robert Manning of Brunne, or Bourn, in Lincolnſhire, tranſlated into Engliſh rimes, from the French of Robert Groſſeteſte, Biſhop of Lincoln, a treatiſe called "*Manuel de Pechés*," as early as the year 1303. This work of his has never been printed, but is preſerved among the Harleian Mss. n. 1701. and the Bodleian, n. 2323. He alſo tranſlated from the French an hiſtory of England; the firſt part, or *Geſta Britonum*, from Maſter Wace; the remainder, to the death of Edward I. from Peter of Langtoft. His tranſlation was finiſhed in 1338. The latter part, with ſome extracts from the former, was printed by Hearne in 1725, from a ſingle Ms.

Sir John Mandevilles account of his Travells was written in 1356. In the laſt edition, Lond. 1727, the text is ſaid to have been formed from a collation of ſeveral Mss. and ſeems to be tolerably correct.

Wicliff died in 1384. His tranſlation of the New Teſtament was printed for the firſt time by Lewis, Lond. 1731. There is an immenſe Catalogue of other works, either really his or aſcribed to him, ſtill extant in Ms. See his Life by Lewis; and Tanner, Bibl. Brit.

Egbert, and that the French was ſtill a foreign, or at leaſt a ſeparate language; I would aſk, whether it is credible, that a Poet, writing in Engliſh upon the moſt familiar ſubjects, would ſtuff his compoſitions with French words and phraſes, which, upon the above ſuppoſition, muſt have been unintelligible to the greateſt part of his readers; or, if he had been ſo very abſurd, is it conceivable, that he ſhould have immediately become, not only the moſt admired, but alſo the moſt popular writer of his time and country?

PART THE SECOND.

HAVING thus endeavoured to ſhew, in oppoſition to the ill-grounded cenſures of Verſtegan and Skinner, that the corruption, or improvement, of the Engliſh language by a mixture of French was not originally owing to Chaucer, I ſhall proceed, in the ſecond part of this Eſſay, to make ſome obſervations upon the moſt material peculiarities of that Norman-Saxon dialect, which I ſuppoſe to have prevailed in the age of Chaucer, and which, in ſubſtance, remains to this day the language of England.

§ 1. By what means the French tongue was firſt introduced and propagated in this iſland has been ſufficiently explained above; but to aſcertain with any exactneſs the degrees, by which it inſinuated itſelf and was ingrafted into the Saxon, would be a much more difficult taſk [25], for want of

[25] In order to trace with exactneſs the progreſs of any language, it ſeems neceſſary, 1. that we ſhould have before us a continued ſeries of authors; 2. that thoſe authors ſhould have been approved, as having written, at leaſt, with purity; and 3. that their writings ſhould have been correctly copied. In the Engliſh language, we have ſcarce any authors within the firſt century after the Conqueſt; of thoſe, who wrote before Chaucer, and whoſe writings have been preſerved, we have no teſtimony of approbation from their contemporaries or ſucceſſors; and laſtly, the Copies of their works, which we have received, are

of a regular ſeries of the writings of approved authors tranſmitted to us by authentic copies. Luckily for us, as our concern is ſolely with that period when the incorporation of the two languages was completed, it is of no great importance to determine the preciſe time at which any word or phraſe became naturalized; and for the ſame reaſon, we have no need to enquire minutely, with reſpect to the other alterations, which the Saxon language in its ſeveral ſtages appears to have undergone, how far they proceeded from the natural mutability of human ſpeech, eſpecially among an unlearned people, and how far they were owing to a ſucceſſive conflux of Daniſh and Norman invaders.

§ II. The following obſervations therefore will chiefly refer to the ſtate, in which the Engliſh language appears to have been about the time of Chaucer, and they will naturally divide themſelves into two parts. The firſt will conſider the remains of the antient Saxon maſs, however defaced or diſguiſed by various accidents; the ſecond will endeavour to point out the nature and effects of the acceſſions, which, in the courſe of near three centuries, it had received from Normandy.

§ III. For the ſake of method it will be convenient to go through the ſeveral parts of ſpeech in the order, in which they are commonly ranged by Grammarians.

1. The Prepoſitive Article ꝑe, ꝑeo, ꝑat, (which anſwered to the ὁ, ἡ, τὸ, of the Greeks, in all its varieties of gender, caſe, and number,) had been long laid aſide, and inſtead of it an indeclinable *the* was prefixed to all ſorts of nouns, in all caſes, and in both numbers.

2. The Declenſions of the Nouns Subſtantive were reduced from ſix to one; and inſtead of a variety of caſes in both numbers, they had only a Genitive caſe ſingular, which was uniformly deduced from the Nominative by adding to it *es*; or only *s*, if it ended in an *e* feminine; and that ſame

are in general ſo full of inaccuracies, as to make it often very difficult for us to be aſſured, that we are in poſſeſſion of the genuine words of the Author.

ſame form was uſed to expreſs the [26] Plural number in all its caſes: as, Nom. *Shour*, Gen. *Shoures*, Plur. *Shoures*. Nom. *Name*, Gen. *Names*, Plur. *Names*.

The Nouns Adjective had loſt all diſtinction of Gender, Caſe, or Number.

3. The Primitive Pronouns retained one oblique caſe [27] in each number: as, *Ic*, or *I*; *We*: Obl. *Me*; *Us*:—*Thou*; *Ye*: Obl. *Thee*; *You*.—*He*, *She*; *Hi* [28], or *They*: Obl. *Him*, *Hire*; *Hem*, or *Them*.

Their Poſſeſſives were in the ſame ſtate with the Adjectives; *Min*, *Thin*, *His*, *Hire*; *Oure*, *Youre*, *Hir*, or *Their* [29]. The

[26] It is ſcarce neceſſary to take notice of a few Plurals, which were expreſſed differently, though their number was greater in the time of Chaucer than it is now. Some of them ſeem to retain their termination in *en* from the ſecond Declenſion of the Saxons; as, oxen, eyen, hoſen, &c. Others ſeem to have adopted it *euphoniæ gratiâ*; as, brethren, eyren, inſtead of, bpoðpu, æzpu. And a few ſeem to have been always irregularly declined; as, men, wimmen, mice, lice, feet, &c. See Hickes, Gr. A. S. p. 11, 12.

[27] I take no notice here of the Genitive caſes, *min*, *thin*, *oure*, *youre*, &c. as being at this time hardly ever diſtinguiſhable from Pronouns Poſſeſſive. How are we to know whether *min boke* ſhould be rendered *liber mei*, or *liber meus?* In the Plural number however, in a few inſtances, the Genitive caſe ſeems to have retained its proper power. C. T. v. 825. oure aller cok—would be more naturally tranſlated—*noſtrûm* omnium gallus, than, *noſter* omnium. And ſo in P. P. fol. cxi. Youre aller hele—*veſtrûm* omnium ſalus; not, *veſtra*.

[28] It is very difficult to ſay from whence, or why, the Pronouns, *They*, *Them*, and *Their*, were introduced into our language. The Saxon Pronouns, *Hi*, *Hem*, and *Hir*, ſeem to have been in conſtant uſe in the time of Robert of Glouceſter. Sir John Mandeville and Chaucer uſe *They*, for *Hi*; but never, as I remember, (in the Mss. of authority) *Them*, or *Their*.

[29] The four laſt of theſe Poſſeſſive Pronouns were ſometimes expreſſed a little differently, viz. *Hires*, *Oures*, *Youres*, and *Hirs*, or *Theirs*; as they are ſtill, when the Noun to which they belong is underſtood, or when they are placed after it in a ſentence. To the queſtion, Whoſe book is this? we anſwer, *Hers*, *Ours*, *Yours*, or *Theirs*: or we declare; This book

The Interrogative and Relative *Who* had a Genitive and Accuſative caſe, *Whos*, and *Whom*, but no variety of Number.

On the contrary, the Demonſtrative, *This*, and *That*, had a Plural expreſſion, *Thiſe*, and *Tho*, but no variety of caſe.

The other words, which are often, though improperly, placed in the claſs of Pronouns, were all become undeclined, like the Adjectives; except, *Eyther*, alteruter; *Neyther*, neuter; *Other*, alter; which had a Genitive caſe Singular, *Eytheres*, *Neytheres*, *Otheres*: *Other*, alius, had a Genitive caſe ſingular, and a Plural number, *Otheres*; and *Aller* (a corruption of ealþa) was ſtill in uſe, as the Genitive Plural of *Alle* [30].

4. The

book is *Hers*, *Ours*, &c. I can hardly conceive that the final *s* in theſe words is a mark of the Poſſeſſive (or Genitive) caſe, as a very able writer [Short Introduction to Engliſh Grammar, p. 35, 6.] ſeems to be inclined to think; becauſe in the inſtances juſt mentioned, and in all which I have been able to find or to imagine, I cannot diſcover the leaſt trace of the uſual powers of the Genitive caſe. The learned Wallis [Gram. Ang. c. 7.] has explained the uſe of theſe Pronouns without attempting to account for their form. He only adds; "Nonnulli, *hern*, *ourn*, *yourn*, *hiſn*, dicunt, pro *hers*, *ours*, &c. ſed barbarè, nec quiſquam (credo) ſic ſcribere ſolet." If it coud be proved that theſe words were antiently terminated in *n*, we might be led to conjecture that they were originally abbreviations of *her own*, *our own*, &c. the *n* being afterwards ſoftened into *s*, as it has been in many other words.

[30] It may be proper here to take a little notice of the Pronoun, or Pronominal Adjective, *Self*, which our beſt Grammarians, from Wallis downwards, have attempted to metamorphoſe into a Subſtantive. In the Saxon language, it is certain that *Sylf* was declined like other Adjectives, and was joined in conſtruction with Pronouns Perſonal and Subſtantives, juſt as *ipſe* is in Latin. They ſaid, Ic ſylf, Ego ipſe; Min ſylfes, mei ipſius; Me ſylfne, me ipſum, &c. Petrus ſylf, Petrus ipſe, &c. [See Hickes, Gr. A. S. p. 26.] In the age of Chaucer, *Self*, like other Adjectives, was become undeclined. Though he writes, *Self*, *Selve*, and *Selven*, thoſe varieties do not denote any diſtinction of caſe or number; for he uſes indifferently, *himſelf* and *himſelven*; *hemſelf* and *hemſelven*. He joins it with Subſtantives, in the ſenſe of *ipſe*, as the Saxons did. [See v. 2862. In that *ſelve* grove. In illo ipſo nemore. v. 4535. Thy *ſelve* neighebour. Ipſe tuus vicinus.] But his great departure from the antient uſage was with reſpect to the Pronouns Perſonal prefixed to *Self*. Inſtead of declining them through the caſes which they ſtill retained, he uſes conſtantly, Myſelf,

4. The Verbs, at the time of which we are treating, were very nearly reduced to the ſimple ſtate in which they are at preſent.

They had four Modes, as now; the Indicative, the Imperative, the Subjunctive, and the Infinitive; and only two expreſſions of Time, the Preſent and the Paſt. All the other varieties of Mode and Time were expreſſed by Auxiliary Verbs.

In the inflexions of their Verbs, they differed very little from us, in the Singular number: *I love, Thou loveſt, He loveth:* but in the Plural they were not agreed among themſelves; ſome [31] adhering to the old Saxon form; *We loveth, Ye loveth, They loveth*; and others adopting, what ſeems to have been, the Teutonic; *We loven, Ye loven, They loven.* In the Plural for, I ſelf, and, Me ſelf; Thyſelf, for, Thou ſelf, and, Thee ſelf; Him ſelf and Hire ſelf, for, He ſelf and She ſelf; and in the Plural number, Our ſelf, for, We ſelf, and Us ſelf; Your ſelf, for, Ye ſelf, and You ſelf; and Hem ſelf, for, They ſelf.

It would be vain to attempt to defend this practice of Chaucer upon any principles of reaſon or grammatical analogy. All that can be ſaid for it is, that perhaps any regular practice was preferable to the confuſion and uncertainty which ſeems to have prevailed before. Accordingly, the writers who ſucceeded him following his example, it became a rule, as I conceive, of the Engliſh language, that Perſonal Pronouns prefixed to *Self* were only uſed in one caſe in each number; viz. thoſe of the Firſt and Second Perſon in the Genitive caſe, according to the Saxon form, and thoſe of the Third in the Accuſative.

By degrees a cuſtom was introduced of annexing *Self* to Pronouns in the Singular number only, and *Selves* (a corruption, I ſuppoſe, of *Selven)* to thoſe in the Plural. This probably contributed to perſuade our late Grammarians that *Self* was a Subſtantive; as the true Engliſh Adjective does not vary in the Plural number. Another cauſe of their miſtake might be, that they conſidered, *my, thy, our, your,* to which *ſelf* is uſually joined, as Pronouns *Poſſeſſive*; whereas I think it more probable that they were the Saxon Genitive caſes of the *Perſonal* Pronouns. The metaphyſical Subſtantive *Self*, of which our more modern Philoſophers and Poets have made ſo much uſe, was unknown, I believe, in the time of Chaucer.

[31] In the long quotation from Treviſa (which ſee above, n. 21.) it may be obſerved, that all his Plural Verbs of the Preſent Tenſe terminate in *eth*; whereas in Sir John Mandeville and Chaucer they terminate almoſt as conſtantly in *en*.

ral of the Paſt Tenſe the latter form prevailed univerſally: I loved, thou lovedeſt, he loved; *We loveden, Ye loveden, They loveden.*

The ſecond perſon Plural in the Imperative Mode regularly terminated in *eth*; as, *Loveth* ye [32]; though the final conſonants, according to the genius of the language, were frequently omitted, eſpecially in verſe.

The Saxon termination of the Infinitive in *an* had been long changed into *en*; *to loven, to liven,* &c. and they were beginning to drop the *n*; *to love, to live.*

The Participle of the Preſent Time began to be generally terminated in *ing*; as, *loving*; though the old form, which terminated in *ende*, or *ande*, was ſtill in uſe; as, *lovende*, or *lovande*. The Participle of the Paſt time continued to be formed, as the Paſt time itſelf was, in *ed*; as, *loved*; or in ſome contraction of *ed* [33]; except among the irregular Verbs [34], where for the moſt part it terminated in *en*; as, *bounden, founden.* The

[32] Mand. p. 281. And at certeyn houres—thei ſeyn to certeyn officeres—*Maketh pees* (i. e. Make ye ſilence). And than ſein the Officeres, *Now pees! lyſteneth* (i. e. liſten ye)—In the following page, *Stondeth*, is uſed for, *Stand ye*; and *Putteth*, for, *Put ye.*

[33] The methods, by which the final *ed* of the Paſt Tenſe and its Participle was contracted or abbreviated, in the age of Chaucer, were chiefly the following:

1. By throwing away the *d.*

This method took place in Verbs, whoſe laſt Conſonant was *t*, preceded by a Conſonant. Thus, *caſte, coſte, hurte, putte, ſlitte,* were uſed inſtead of, *caſted, coſted, hurted, putted, ſlitted.*

2. By tranſpoſing the *d.*

This was very generally done in Verbs, whoſe laſt Conſonant was *d*, preceded by a Vowel. Thus, inſtead of, *reded, leded, ſpreded, bleded, feded,* it was uſual to write, *redde, ledde, ſpredde, bledde, fedde.*—And this ſame method of tranſpoſition, I apprehend, was originally applied to ſhorten thoſe words which we now contract by Syncope; as, *lov'd, liv'd, ſmil'd, bear'd, fear'd,* which were antiently written, *lovde, livde, ſmilde, herde, ferde.*

3. By tranſpoſing the *d* and changing it into *t.*

This method was uſed 1. in Verbs, whoſe laſt Conſonant was *t*, preceded by a Vowel. Thus, *leted, ſweted, meted,* were changed into, *lette, ſwette, mette.*—2. in Verbs, whoſe laſt Conſonant was *d* preceded by a Conſonant. Thus, *bended, bilded, girded,* were changed into, *bente, bilte, girte.*—And generally, in Verbs, in which *d* is changed into *t*, I conceive

The greateſt part of the Auxiliary Verbs were only in uſe in the Preſent and Paſt Tenſes of their Indicative and Subjunctive Modes. They were inflected in thoſe tenſes like other Verbs, and were prefixed to the Infinitive Mode of the Verb to which they were Auxiliary. I *ſhall* loven; I *will*, or *woll*, loven; I *may*, or *mow*, loven; I *can*, or *con*, loven, &c. We *ſhullen* loven; We *willen*, or *wollen*, loven; We *mowen* loven; We *connen* loven, &c. In the Paſt tenſe, I [35] *ſhulde* loven; I *wolde* loven; I *mighte*, or

that *d* was firſt tranſpoſed; ſo that *dwelled*, *paſſed*, *dremed*, *feled*, *keped*, ſhould be ſuppoſed to have been firſt changed into, *dwellde*, *paſsde*, *dremde*, *felde*, *kepde*, and then into, *dwelte*, *paſte*, *dremte*, *felte*, *kepte*.

4. The laſt method, together with a change of the radical vowel, will account for the analogy of a ſpecies of Verbs, generally reputed anomalous, which form their Paſt Time and its Participle, according to modern orthography, in *ght*. The proceſs ſeems to have been thus. *Bring*, *bringed*, *brongde*, *brogde*, *brogte*; *Think*, *thinked*, *thonkde*, *thokde*, *thokte*; *Teche*, *teched*, *tachde*, *tachte*, &c. Only *fought*, from *fighted*, ſeems to have been formed, by throwing away the *d* (according to method 1.) and changing the radical Vowel. See inſtances of ſimilar contractions in the Francic language. Hickes, Gramm. Fr. Th. p. 66.

[34] I conſider thoſe verbs only as irregular, in which the Paſt Time and its Participle differ from each other. Their varieties are too numerous to be particularly examined here; but I believe there are ſcarce any, in which the deviations from the regular form will not appear to have been made by ſome method of contraction, or abbreviation, ſimilar to thoſe which have been pointed out in the laſt note among the Regular Verbs. The common termination of the Participle in *en* is clearly a ſubſtitution for *ed*, probably for the ſake of a more agreeable ſound; and it is often ſhortened, as *ed* has been ſhewn to be, by tranſpoſition. Thus, *drawen*, *knowen*, *boren*, *ſtolen*, were changed into *drawne*, *knowne*, *borne*, *ſtolne*.

[35] *Shulde* and *Wolde* are contracted from *Shulled*, and *Wolled*, by tranſpoſing the *d*, according to method 2.

Mighte and *Moughte* are formed from *maghed* and *moghed*, according to method 3. *Maghed*, *maghde*, *maghte*; *Moghed*, *moghde*, *moghte*.

Coude is from *conned*, by tranſpoſition of the *d*, and ſoftening the *n* into *u*. It is often written *couthe*, and always ſo, I believe, when it is uſed as a Participle. In the ſame manner Biſhop Douglas, and other Scotiſh writers, uſe *Begouth* as the Præterit of *Begin*. *Begonned*, *begonde*, *begoude*, *begouthe*.

or *moughte* loven; I *coude* loven, &c. We *ſhulden*, we *wolden*, we *mighten*, or *moughten*, we *couden* loven, &c.

The Auxiliary *To Haven* was a complete Verb, and, being prefixed to the Participle of the Paſt time, was uſed to expreſs the Preterperfect and Preterpluperfect Tenſes. I *have* loved, Thou *haveſt*, or *haſt* loved, He *haveth*, or *hath* loved; We *haven*, or *han* loved, &c. I *hadde* [36] loved, thou *haddeſt* loved, he *hadde* loved; We, ye, they, *hadden* loved.

The Auxiliary *To ben* was alſo a complete Verb, and being prefixed to the Participle of the Paſt time, with the help of the other Auxiliary Verbs, ſupplied the place of the whole Paſſive voice, for which the Saxon language had no other form of expreſſion. I *am*, thou *art*, he *is* loved; We, ye, they, *aren*, or *ben* loved. I *was*, thou *waſt*, he *was* loved; We, ye, they, *weren* loved [37].

5. With reſpect to the indeclinable parts of Speech, it will be ſufficient to obſerve here, that many of them ſtill remained pure Saxon: the greateſt number had undergone a ſlight change of a letter or two; and the more conſiderable alterations, by which ſome had been diſfigured, were fairly deducible from that propenſity to abbreviation, for which the inhabitants of this iſland have been long remarkable, though perhaps not more juſtly ſo than their neighbours.

§ IV. Such

[36] *Hadde* is contracted from *Haved*, as *made* is from *maked*. See Hickes, Gram. Fr. Th. p. 66.

[37] The Verb *To do* is conſidered by Wallis, and other later Grammarians, as an Auxiliary Verb. It is ſo uſed, though very rarely, by Chaucer. [See v. 14742,4.] He more commonly uſes it tranſitively: [v. 10074. Do ſtripen me. *Faites me depouiller*.—v. 10075. Do me drenche, *Faites me noyer*.] but ſtill more frequently to ſave the repetition of a verb. [v. 269.

His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright,
As DON the ſterres in a froſty night.]

Dr. Hickes has taken notice that *do* was uſed in this laſt manner by the Saxons: [Gr. A. S. p. 77.] and ſo was *faire* by the French, and indeed is ſtill. It muſt be confeſſed, that the exact power, which *do*, as an auxiliary, now has in our language, is not eaſy to be defined, and ſtill leſs to be accounted for from analogy.

§ IV. Such was, in general, the ſtate of the Saxon part of the Engliſh language when Chaucer began to write: let us now take a ſhort view of the acceſſions, which it may be ſuppoſed to have received at different times from Normandy.

As the language of our Anceſtors was complete in all its parts, and had ſerved them for the purpoſes of diſcourſe and even of compoſition in various kinds, long before they had any intimate acquaintance with their French neighbours, they had no call from neceſſity, and conſequently no ſufficient inducement, to alter its original and radical conſtitutions, or even its cuſtomary forms. Accordingly, we have juſt ſeen, that, in all the eſſential parts of Speech, the characteriſtical features of the Saxon idiom were always preſerved; and we ſhall ſee preſently, that the crowds of French words, which from time to time were imported, were themſelves made ſubject, either immediately or by degrees, to the laws of that ſame idiom.

§ V. The words, which were thus imported, were chiefly Nouns Subſtantive, Adjectives, Verbs, and Participles. The Adverbs, which are derived from French Adjectives, ſeem to have been formed from them after they were Angliciſed, as they have all the Saxon termination *lich* or *ly* [38], inſtead of the French *ment*. As to the other indeclinable parts of Speech, our language, being ſufficiently rich in its own ſtores, has borrowed nothing from France, except perhaps an Interjection or two.

The Nouns Subſtantive in the French language (as in all the other languages derived from the Latin) had loſt their Caſes long before the time of which we are treating; but ſuch of them as were naturaliſed here, ſeem all to have acquired a Genitive caſe, according to the corrupted Saxon form, which has been ſtated above. Their Plural number was alſo new modelled to the ſame form, if neceſſary; for in Nouns ending in *e* feminine, as the greater part of the French did, the two languages were already agreed. Nom. *Flour*. Gen. *Floures*. Plur. *Floures*. Nom. *Dame*. Gen. *Dames*. Plur. *Dames*.

On

[38] As *rarely*, *continually*, *verily*, *bravely*, &c. which correſpond to the French adverbs, rarement, continuellement, veraiment, bravement, &c.

On the contrary, the Adjectives, which at home had a diſtinction of Gender and Number, upon their naturaliſation here, ſeem to have been generally ſtript of both, and reduced to the ſimple ſtate of the Engliſh Adjective, without Caſe, Gender, or Number.

The French Verbs were obliged to lay aſide all their differences of Conjugation. *Accorder, ſouffrir, recevoir, deſcendre,* were regularly changed into *—accorden, ſuffren, receiven, deſcenden.* They brought with them only two Tenſes, the Preſent and the Paſt; nor did they retain any ſingularity of Inflexion, which coud diſtinguiſh them from other Verbs of Saxon growth.

The Participle indeed of the Preſent time, in ſome Verbs, appears to have ſtill preſerved its original French form; as, *uſant, ſuffiſant,* &c.

The Participle of the Paſt time adopted, almoſt univerſally, the regular Saxon termination in *ed*; as *accorded, ſuffred, received, deſcended.* It even frequently aſſumed the prepoſitive particle ȝe, (or y, as it was latterly written,) which, among the Saxons, was very generally, though not peculiarly, prefixed to that Participle.

§ VI. Upon the whole, I believe it may be ſaid with truth, that, at the time which we are conſidering, though the form of our Language was ſtill Saxon, the matter was in a great meaſure French. The novelties of all kinds, which the Revolution in 1066 had introduced, demanded a large ſupply of new terms; and our Anceſtors very naturally took what they wanted, from the Language which was already familiar to a conſiderable part of the Community. Our Poets in particular, who have generally the principal ſhare in modelling a Language, found it their intereſt to borrow as many words as they conveniently coud from France. As they were for a long time chiefly Tranſlators, this expedient ſaved them the trouble of hunting for correſpondent terms in Saxon. The French words too, being the remains of a poliſhed language, were ſmoother and ſlid eaſier into metre than the Saxon, which had never undergone any regular cultivation: their final ſyllables chimed together with more frequent conſonancies, and their Accents were better adapted to Riming Poetry. But more of this in the next Part.

PART

PART THE THIRD.

BEFORE we proceed in the third and laſt part of this Eſſay, in which we are to conſider the Verſification of Chaucer, it may be uſeful to premiſe a few obſervations upon the ſtate of Engliſh Poetry antecedent to his time.

§ 1. That the Saxons had a ſpecies of writing, which differed from their common proſe, and was conſidered by themſelves as Poetry [39], is very certain; but it ſeems equally certain, that their compoſitions of that kind were neither divided into verſes of a determinate number of ſyllables, nor embelliſhed with what we call Rime [40]. There are no traces, I believe, to

[39] The account which Beda has given of Cædmon [Eccl. Hiſt. l. IV. c. 24.] is ſufficient to prove this. He repeatedly calls the compoſitions of Cædmon *carmina*—*poemata*—and in one place, *verſus:* which words in the Saxon tranſlations are rendered, Leoþ,—Leoþ ꝛonȝeꝛ, or ꝛonȝeꝛ—and ꝛeꝛꝛ: and *ars canendi* is tranſlated, Leoþ cꝛæꝛc or ꝛanȝ cꝛæꝛc.

Aſſer alſo, in his Life of Alfred, ſpeaks of *Saxonica poemata* and *Saxonica carmina* [p. 16. 43.] and moſt probably the *Cantilenæ per ſucceſſiones temporum detritæ*, which Malmeſbury cites in his Hiſtory, l. II. p. 52. were in the Saxon language. The ſame writer [l. v. de Pontif. edit. Gale.] mentions a *Carmen triviale* of Aldhelm (the author of the Latin Poem *de Virginitate*, who died in 709,) as *adhuc vulgo cantitatum*; and he quotes the teſtimony of King Alfred, in his *Liber manualis*, or *Hand-boc*, as ſaying, "that no one was ever equal to Aldhelm in Engliſh Poetry."

[40] Both theſe circumſtances are evident from the moſt curſory view of the ſeveral ſpecimens of Saxon Poetry, which Hickes has exhibited in his Gram. Ang. Sax. c. xxi. and they are allowed by that learned writer himſelf. Unwilling however, as it ſhould ſeem, to leave his favourite language without ſome ſyſtem of verſification, he ſuppoſes, that the Saxons obſerved the quantity of ſyllables in their verſes, "though perhaps," he adds, "not ſo ſtrictly as the Heroic Greek and Latin Poets."

He

to be found of either Rime or Metre in our language, till ſome years after the Conqueſt; ſo that I ſhould apprehend we muſt have been obliged for both

He gives three reaſons for this ſuppoſition. 1. Becauſe they did not uſe Rime. 2. Becauſe they tranſpoſed their words in ſuch an unnatural manner. "Hoc autem cur facerent "Anglo-Saxonum Poetæ, nulla, ut videtur, alia aſſignari cauſa poteſt, quam quæ, ut idem "facerent, Græcos et Latinos poetas coegit; nempe Metri Lex." 3. Becauſe they had a great number of diſſyllable and polyſyllable words, which were fit for metrical feet.

However ſpecious theſe reaſons may appear, they are certainly far from concluſive, even if we had no monuments of Saxon Poetry remaining; but in the preſent caſe, I apprehend, the only ſatisfactory proof would have been to have produced, out of the great heap of Poetical compoſitions in the Saxon language, ſome regular metrical verſes; that is, ſome portions of words, ſimilar to each other in the nature and order of their component ſyllables, and occurring either in a continued ſeries, or at ſtated intervals. If all external proofs of the nature of the Roman Poetry were loſt, a few verſes of Virgil or Horace would be ſufficient to convince us, that their metres were regulated by the quantity of ſyllables; and if Cædmon had really written in a metre regulated by the quantity of ſyllables, a few of his lines muſt have afforded us the ſame conviction with reſpect to the general laws of his verſification.

For my own part, I confeſs myſelf unable to diſcover any material diſtinction of the Saxon Poetry from Proſe, except a greater pomp of diction, and a more ſtately kind of march.

Our anceſtors affected a certain pomp of ſtyle in all their compoſitions. Angli (ſays Malmeſbury, l. i. p. 13.) *pompatice* dictare amant. And this affectation, I ſuſpect, was the true cauſe of their ſo frequently inverting the natural order of their words, eſpecially in Poetry. The obſcurity ariſing from theſe inverſions had the appearance of Pomp. That they were not owing to the conſtraint of any metrical Laws (as Hickes ſuppoſes) may be preſumed from their being commonly uſed in Proſe, and even in Latin Proſe, by Saxon writers. Ethelwerd, an Hiſtorian deſcended in the fifth degree from King Ethelred [inter Script. poſt Bedam, p. 831—850.], is full of them. The following paſſage of his hiſtory if literally tranſlated, would read very like Saxon Poetry. "Abſtrahuntur tunc | ferventes fide | anno in eodem | Hibernia ſtirpe | tres viri lecti; | furtim conſuunt lembum | taurinis byrſis; | alimentum ſibi | hebdomadarium ſupplent; | elevant dies | per vela ſeptem totidemque noctes, &c."

We do not ſee any marks of ſtudied alliteration in the old Saxon Poetry; ſo that we might attribute the introduction of that practice to the Danes, if we were certain, that it made a part of the Scaldic verſification at the time of the Daniſh ſettlements in England.

However that may have been, Giraldus Cambrenſis [Deſcr. Camb. p. 889.] ſpeaks of

both to the Normans, who very early [41] diſtinguiſhed themſelves by poetical performances in their Vulgar tongue.

The

Annomination, which he deſcribes to be what we call *Alliteration*, as the favourite rhetorical figure of both the Welſh and Engliſh in his time. "Adeo igitur hoc verborum ornatu duæ nationes, Angli ſcil. et Cambri, in omni ſermone exquiſito utuntur, ut nihil ab his eleganter dictum, nullum niſi rude et agreſte cenſeatur eloquium, ſi non ſchematis hujus limâ plene fuerit expolitum." It is plain that Alliteration muſt have had very powerful charms for the ears of our anceſtors, as we find that the Saxon Poetry, by the help of this embelliſhment alone, even after it had laid aſide its pompous phraſeology, was able to maintain itſelf, without Rime or Metre, for ſeveral centuries. See Dr. Percy's Eſſay on the Metre of Pierce Plowman's Viſions. Rel. of antient Poetry, vol. ii.

[41] I cannot find that the French Antiquaries have been able to produce any Poetry in any of the dialects of their language, of an earlier date than the Conqueſt of England, or indeed than the begining of the XIIth Century. However we read of a Thibaud de vernun, Canon of Rouen, who, before the year 1053, "multorum geſta Sanctorum, ſed et S^ti^ Wandregeſili, a ſuâ latinitate tranſtulit, atque in communis linguæ uſum ſatis facunde refudit, ac ſic, *ad quamdam tinnuli rythmi ſimilitudinem, urbanas ex illis cantilenas edidit*. [De Mirac. S^ti^ Vulframni. Auctore Monacho Fontanell. tempt. Will. I. ap. Dacherii Acta SS. Ord. Ben. t. iii. p. 379.] It is probable too, that the "*vulgares cantus*," which, according to Raimond de Agiles [Geſta Dei, p. 180.], were compoſed againſt Arnoulph, a Chaplain of the Duke of Normandy, in the firſt Croiſade, were in the French language; and there can be little doubt that William IX, Duke of Aquitain, upon his return from Jeruſalem in 1101, made uſe of his native tongue, when "*miſerias captivitatis ſuæ, ut erat jocundus et lepidus, multotiens retulit rythmicis verſibus cum facetis modulationibus*." Ord. Vital. l. x. p. 793. The Hiſtory of the taking of Jeruſalem, which is ſaid to have been written by the Chevalier Gregoire Bechada, of Tours in Limoges, "*maternâ linguâ, rythmo vulgari, ut populus pleniter intelligeret*," [Labbe, Bibl. Nov. t. ii. p. 296.] has not yet been brought to light; ſo that probably the oldeſt French Poem of any length now extant is a tranſlation of the *Beſtiarius* by Philippe de Thaun, it being addreſſed to Aliz (Adeliza of Louvain) the ſecond Queen of our Henry I.

There is a copy of this Poem among the *Cotton* Mss. Nero. A. v. The authors of the *Hiſtoire Literaire de la France*, t. ix. p. 173—90. ſuppoſe it to have been written about 1125, that is, thirty years before *Le Brut*, which Fauchet had placed at the head of his liſt of French Poems.

I ſhall take occaſion in another place to ſhew, that the real author of *Le Brut* was Wace (the ſame who wrote the *Roman de Rou,)* and not Wiſtace, as Fauchet calls him.

The Metres which they uſed, and which we ſeem to have borrowed from them, were plainly copied from the Latin [42] rythmical verſes, which, in the declenſion of that language, were current in various forms among thoſe, who either did not underſtand, or did not regard, the true quantity of ſyllables; and the practice of Riming [43] is probably to be deduced from the

[42] The Latin Rythmical verſes reſembled the Metrical in the number of ſyllables only, without any regard to quantity. "Arma cano virumque qui primus Trojæ ab oris" would paſs for a very good Rythmical Hexameter. The greateſt part however of theſe compoſitions were in imitation of the Iambic and Trochaic metres; and in them, if the Accents fell luckily, the unlearned ear would often be as well pleaſed as if the laws of Quantity were obſerved. The two Rythmical Hymns quoted by Beda [De Metris, edit. Putſch. p. 2380.] are ſufficient to prove this. The firſt, he obſerves, "*ad inſtar Iambici metri pulcherrime factus eſt.*"

O rex æterne Domine
Rerum creator omnium, &c.

The other is "*ad formam metri Trochaici.*"

Apparebit repentina dies magna Domini
Fur obſcurâ velut nocte improviſos occupans.

In the former of theſe Hymns, "*Domine,*" to a modern ear at leaſt, ſounds as well as "*nomine*;" and in the latter, "*dies*" and "*velut,*" being accented upon their firſt Syllables, affect us no other wiſe than "*dices*" and "*velum*" would have done.

From ſuch Latin Rythms, and chiefly thoſe of the Iambic form, the preſent Poetical meaſures of all the nations of Roman Europe are clearly derived. Inſtead of long and ſhort Syllables, the Feet of our Poetry are compoſed of Syllables accented and unaccented, or rather of Syllables ſtrongly and leſs ſtrongly accented; and hence it is, that we have ſo little variety of Feet, and conſequently of Metres; becauſe the poſſible combinations of Syllables accented and unaccented are, from the nature of ſpeech, much more limited in point of number, than the combinations of long and ſhort Syllables were in the Greek and Latin languages.

[43] We ſee evident marks of a fondneſs for Rime in the Hymns of S. Ambroſius and S. Damaſus, as early as the fourth Century. One of the Hymns of Damaſus, which begins,

"Martyris ecce dies Agathæ
Virginis emicat eximiæ," &c.

the ſame original, as we find that practice to have prevailed in Eccleſiaſtical Hymns, and other compoſitions, in Latin, ſome centuries before Otfrid of Weiſſenberg, the firſt known Rimer in any of the vulgar European dialects.

§ 11. I wiſh it were in my power to give a regular hiſtory of the progreſs which our Anceſtors made in this new ſtyle of verſification; but [44], except

is regularly rimed throughout. Prudentius, who had a more claſſical taſte, ſeems ſtudiouſly to have avoided Rimes; but Sedulius and Fortunatus, in the fifth and ſixth Centuries, uſe them frequently in their Hymns. See their works, and an Hymn of the latter ap. Fabric. Bib. Med. Ætat. v. FORTUNATUS.

The learned Muratori, in his Diſſertation *de Rythmicâ Veterum Poeſi*, [Antiq. Med. Ævi, Diſſert. xl.] has collected together a vaſt heap of examples, which prove that Rimes were very generally uſed in Hymns, Sequences, and other religious compoſitions in Latin, in the VIIth, VIIIth, and IXth Centuries; ſo that for my own part I think it as probable, that the Poets in the vulgar languages (who firſt appeared about the IXth Century) borrowed their Rimes from the Latin Poetry of that age, as it is evident that they did the forms of their verſification.

Otfrid of Weiſſenberg, the earlieſt Rimer that is known in any of the modern Languages, about the year 870, calls Rime, in the ſtyle of the Latin Grammarians, *Schema omæoteleuton* [Præf. ad Liutbert. ap. Schilter. Theſ. Antiq. Teuton, t. i. p. 11.] And when the Monk, who has been cited in n. 41. ſays, that Thibaud de Vernun compoſed his Songs "*ad quamdam tinnuli rythmi ſimilitudinem*," he muſt mean, I think, that he compoſed them "in imitation of [Latin] jingling Rythm." I ſay, *Latin*, or at leaſt ſome *foreign*, Rythm, becauſe otherwiſe he would rather have ſaid *in rythmo tinnulo*. The addition of the epithet *tinnulus* ſeems to ſhew plainly enough, that *Rythmus* alone did not then ſignify what we call *Rime*.

[44] William of Malmeſbury [de Geſt. Pont. Angl. l. iii. p. 271.] has preſerved two Riming verſes of Aldred, Archbiſhop of York, which that Prelate threw out againſt one Urſe, Sheriff of Worceſterſhire, not long after the Conqueſt. "Hateſt thou Urſe—Have thou God's curſe." "*Vocaris Urſus—Habeas Dei maledictionem.*" Malmeſbury ſays, that he inſerts this Engliſh, "*quod Latina verba non ſicut Anglica concinnitati reſpondent.*" The Concinnity, I ſuppoſe, muſt have conſiſted in the Rime, and would hardly have been thought worth repeating, if Rime in Engliſh had not then been a novelty.

The lines in the Saxon Chronicle, to which I mean to refer, are in p. 191. ed Gibſ. The paſſage begins,

Lærelar

except a few lines in the Saxon Chronicle upon the death of William the Conquerour, which ſeem to have been intended for verſes of the Modern faſhion, and a ſhort Canticle, which, according to Matthew Paris [45], the bleſſed Virgin was pleaſed to dictate to Godric, an Hermite near Durham, I have

Cartelar he let pyncean.
Geapme men rpiðe rpencean—

All the lines are not in Rime; but I ſhall ſet down a few, in Engliſh characters, which I think coud not have chimed together ſo exactly by mere accident.

Thet he nam be rihte
And mid mycelan un-rihte
Of his leode
For littelre neode—
He fætte mycel deor-frith,
And he lægde laga ther with—
He forbead tha heortas,
Swylce eac tha baras;
Swa ſwithe he lufode tha hea-deor
Swylce he wære heora fæder.
Eac he fætte be tham haran,
That hi moſten freo faran—

The concluding lines are.

Se æl-mihtiga God
Kithe his ſaule mild-heortniſſe
And do him his ſynna forgifeneſſe.

The writer of this part of the Chronicle (as he tells us himſelf, p. 189.) had *ſeen* the Conquerour.

[45] Hiſt. Angl. p. 100. Godric died in 1170, ſo that, according to tradition, the Canticle was prior to that period. The firſt Stanza being incorrectly printed, I ſhall only tranſcribe the laſt.—

Seinte Marie, Chriſtes bur,
Meidenes clenhad, moderes flur,
Dilie mine ſennen, rixe in min mod,
Bringe me to winne with ſelfe God—

Hoc

I have not been able to diſcover any attempts at Riming Poetry, which can with probability be referred to an earlier period than the reign of Henry the ſecond. In that reign Layamon [46], a Prieſt of Ernleye near Severn, as he calls himſelf, tranſlated (chiefly) from the French of Wace [47] a fabulous

Hoc Canticum (ſays M. P.) *poteſt hoc modo in Latinum transferri.*

Sancta Maria, Chriſti thalamus,
virginalis puritas, matris flos,
dele mea crimina, regna in mente meâ,
duc me ad fælicitatem cum ſolo Deo.

Upon the authority of this tranſlation I have altered *pinne* (as it is in the print) to *winne*. The Saxon p is often miſtaken for a p.

[46] This work of Layamon is extant among the Cotton Mss. Cal. A. ix. A much later copy, in which the author, by a natural corruption was called *Laweman*, was deſtroyed by the fire. There is an account of both copies in Wanley's Cat. Mss. Septent. p. 228. and p. 237.

The following ſhort extract from fol. 7, 8. containing an account of the Sirens, which Brutus met with in his voyage, will ſerve to ſupport what is ſaid in the text of this Author's intermixing Rimes with his proſe.

Ther heo funden the Merminnen,
That beoth deor of muchele ginnen.
Wiſmen hit thunchet ful iwis,
Bineothe thon gurdle hit thunceth fiſc.
Theos habbeth ſwa murie ſong,
Ne beo tha dai na ſwa long,
Ne bith na man weri
Heora ſonges to heran—

[47] The French Clerk, whom Layamon profeſſes to have followed in his hiſtory, is called by Wanley [Cat. Mss. Sept. p. 228.] *Wate*; as if poor *Maiſtre Wace* were doomed to have his name perpetually miſtaken. Fauchet, and a long ſtring of French Antiquaries, have agreed to call him *Wiſtace*. I ſhall here, in juſtice to *Maiſtre Wace*, (for whom I have a great reſpect, not only as a very antient but as a very ingenious Rimer,) ſtate my reaſons ſhortly for believing, that he was the real author of that tranſlation in French verſe of Geffrey of Monmouth's Romance, which is commonly called *Le Brut*.

In

a fabulous hiſtory of the Britons, entitled " Le Brut," which Wace himſelf, about the year 1155, had tranſlated from the Latin of Geffrey of Monmouth.

In the firſt place his name is diſtinctly written in the text of three Mss. of very conſiderable antiquity. Two of them are in the Muſeum, viz. *Cotton.* Vitell. A. x. and *Reg.* 13 A. xxi. The third is at Cambridge, in the Library of Bennet College, n. 58. In a fourth Ms. alſo in the Muſeum, *Harl.* 6508. it is written *Gazce*, and *Gace*, by a ſubſtitution of G for W, very uſual in the French language.

Secondly, in the Ms. abovementioned of Layamon's hiſtory Cal. A. ix. if I may truſt my own eyes, the name is *Wace*; and not *Wate*, as Wanley read it. The Saxon ꞇ is not very unlike a c. What Layamon has ſaid further, " that this Wace was a French Clerk, and preſented his book to Alienor, the Queen of Henry" [the Second,] agrees perfectly well with the date of *Le Brut* (in 1155, according to all the copies) and with the account which Wace himſelf, in his *Roman de Rou*, has given of his attachment to Henry.

Thirdly, in a ſubſequent tranſlation of *Le Brut*, which was made by Robert of Brunne in the beginning of the XIVth Century, he repeatedly names *Mayſter Wace*, as the author (or rather tranſlator from the Latin) of the French Hiſtory. See *Hearne's* App. to Pref. to *Peter Langtoft*, p. xcviii.

In oppoſition to this ſtrong evidence in favour of *Wace*, we have nothing material, except the Ms. of *Le Brut* quoted by Fauchet [*de la Langue Françoiſe*, l. ii.], in which, according to his citation, the author is called *Wiſtace*. The later French writers, who have called him ſo, I appprehend, have only followed Fauchet. The Reader will judge, whether it is not more probable, that the writer of the Ms. or even Fauchet himſelf, may have made a little ſlip in this matter, than that ſo many Mss. as I have quoted above, and the ſucceſſive teſtimonies of LAYAMON and ROBERT OF BRUNNE, ſhould have concurred in calling the author of *Le Brut* WACE, if that had not been his true name.

I will juſt add, that *La vie de Seint Nicholas*, which is frequently quoted by *Hickes* [Gr. A. S. p. 146. 149. et al.] was probably a work of this ſame *Wace*, as appears from the following paſſage. [Ms. Bodl. 1687. v. 17. from the end.]

Ci faut le livre *meſtre Guace*,
Qil ad de Seint Nicholas fait,
De Latin en Romaunz eſtreit
A Oſberd le fiz Thiout,
Qui Seint Nicholas mout amout.—

And I ſhould ſuſpect, that *Le Martyre de St. George en vers François par Robert Guaco*, mentioned by M. Lebeuf as extant in the Bibl. Colbert. Cod. 3745 [Mem. de l'Acad. D. J. et B. L. t. xvii. p. 731.] ought to be aſcribed to the ſame author, as *Guaco* is a very ſtrange

Monmouth. Though the greateſt part of this work of Layamon reſemble the old Saxon Poetry, without Rime or metre, yet he often intermixes a number of ſhort verſes, of unequal lengths but riming together pretty exactly, and in ſome places he has imitated not unſucceſsfully the regular octoſyllable meaſure of his French original.

§ III. It may ſeem extraordinary, after theſe proofs, that the art of Riming was not unknown or unpractiſed in this country in the time of Henry II, that we ſhould be obliged to ſearch through a ſpace of above an hundred years, without being able to meet with a ſingle maker of Engliſh Rimes, whom we know to have written in that interval. The caſe I ſuſpect to have been this. The ſcholars of that age (and there were many who might fairly be called ſo, in the Engliſh dominions abroad [48] as well as at home) affected to write only [49] in Latin, ſo that we do not find that they ever compoſed, in verſe or proſe, in any other language. On the other hand they, who meant to recommend themſelves by their Poetry to the favour of the great, took care to write in French, the only language which their patrons underſtood; and hence it is, that we ſee ſo many French

ſtrange name. The Chriſtian name of Wace was *Robert*. See Huet, Orit. de Caen, p. 412.

[48] The following paſſage of Roger de Hoveden [p. 672.] gives a ſtriking deſcription of the extent of the Engliſh dominions in the time of Richard I. *Sciendum eſt quod tota terra, quæ eſt ab Anglia uſque in Hiſpaniam, ſecus mare, videlicet Normannia, Britannia, Pictavia, eſt de dominio Regis Angliæ.* The Kings of France at that time were not poſſeſſed of an inch of territory upon the coaſts of the Ocean.

[49] It will be ſufficient to name John of Saliſbury, Peter of Blois, Joſeph of Exeter, Gerald Barry, Nigell Wireker, Geffrey Vinſauf. I ſhould add to this liſt Walter Map, if there were not a tradition, not entirely deſtitute of probability, that he was the author of the *Roman de Saint Graal* in French. I find this in an old Ms. of Triſtan, Bib. Reg. 20. D. ii. p. antep. *Quant Boort ot conte laventure del Saint Graal, teles come eles eſtoient avenues, eles furent miſes en eſcrit, gardees en lamere de Salibieres, dont Meſtre Galtier Mapleſtreſt a faire ſon livre du Saint Graal, por lamor du roy Herri ſon ſengnor, qui fiſt leſtorie tralater del Latin en Romanz.*

French poems [50], about that time, either addreſſed directly to the principal perſons at the Engliſh court, or at leaſt written on ſuch ſubjects as we may ſuppoſe to have been moſt likely to engage their attention. Whatever therefore of Engliſh Poetry was produced, in this infancy of the art, being probably the work of illiterate authors and circulating only among the

Romanz. The adventure of the *Saint Graal* is plainly written upon a very different plan from the other Romances of the Round Table, and is likely enough to have come from an Eccleſiaſtick, though rather, I confeſs, from a graver one than Walter Map may be ſuppoſed to have been. The French Romance, from which our Romance called "*Mort d'Arthur*" is tranſlated, ſeems to be an injudicious jumble of *Le Brut*, *Lancelot*, *Triſtan*, the *Saint Graal*, and ſome other Romances of leſs note, which were all, I apprehend, originally ſeparate works.

[50] *Le Beſtiaire*, by *Philippe de Thaun*, addreſſed to Queen Adeliſa; *Le Brut* and *Le Roman de Rou*, by *Wace*, have been mentioned above. Beſides the *Roman de Rou*, there is another Chronicle of Normandy in French verſe by *Maitre Beneit*, compiled by order of Henry II. Ms. *Harl.* 1717. The ſame *Beneit* was, perhaps, the author of the *Vie de St. Thomas*, Ms. *Harl.* 3775. though he there calls himſelf

"*Frere Beneit, le pecheour,*
"*ove les neirs dras*"—

At the end of a copy of *Le Brut*, Bib. *Reg.* 13 A. xxi. there is a Continuation of the Hiſtory to the death of William II, in the ſame Metre, by a *Geffrei Gaimar*, which eſcaped the obſervation of Mr. Caſley; and at the end of another copy, *Vitell.* A. x. the Hiſtory is continued by an anonymous author to the acceſſion of King John.

Richard I. compoſed himſelf in French. A ſpecimen of his Poetry has been publiſhed by Mr. Walpole, Cat. of Royal Authors, v. i. And his Chancellor, William Biſhop of Ely (who, as has been obſerved before, "was totally ignorant of the Engliſh language"), was by no means behindhand with his Maſter in his encouragement of French Poets; for of this Biſhop the paſſage in Hoveden is to be underſtood, which Mr. Walpole has applied to the King himſelf. It is part of a letter of Hugh Biſhop of Coventry, who, ſpeaking of the *Biſhop of Ely*, ſays, that HE, "*ad augmentum et famam ſui nominis, emendicata carmina et rythmos adulatorios comparabat, et* de regno Francorum *cantores et joculatores muneribus allexerat, ut de illo canerent in plateis; et jam dicebatur ubique, quod non erat talis in orbe.*" Hoveden, p. 103.

the vulgar [51], we need not be much ſurpriſed that no more of it has been tranſmitted down to poſterity.

§ IV. The learned Hickes, however, has pointed out to us two very curious pieces, which may with probability be referred to this period. The firſt of them is a Paraphraſe of the Goſpel Hiſtories, entitled *Ormulum* [52], by

[51] To theſe cauſes we may probably impute the loſs of thoſe Songs upon Hereward (the laſt perhaps of the Saxon heroes,) which, according to Ingulphus, "were ſung about the ſtreets" in his time. Hiſt. Croyl. p. 68. Robert of Brunne alſo mentions "a Rime" concerning Gryme the Fiſher, the founder of Grymeſby; Hanelok the Dane; and his wife Goldeburgh, daughter to a King Athelwold; who all now, together with their bard,

—illacrymabiles
Urgentur ignotique longâ
Nocte.—

See Tranſlation of Peter of Langtoft, p. 25. and Camden's Brit. p. 569.

[52] The Ormulum ſeems to be placed by Hickes among the firſt writings after the Conqueſt [Gram. Ang. Sax. c. xxii. p. 165.], but, I confeſs, I cannot conceive it to have been earlier than the reign of Henry II. There is a peculiarity in the author's orthography, which conſiſts in doubling the Conſonants; e. g. brother, he writes, *brotherr*; after, *afterr*, &c. He has done this by deſign, and charges thoſe who ſhall copy his book to be very careful to write thoſe letters twice, which he has written ſo, as otherwiſe, he aſſures them, "they will not write the word right." Hickes has taken notice of this peculiarity, but has not attempted to explain the author's reaſons for it; and indeed, without a more perfect knowledge than we now probably can have of the Saxon pronunciation, they ſeem totally inexplicable. In the few lines, which I think it neceſſary to quote here as a ſpecimen of the Metre, I ſhall venture (firſt begging Ormin's pardon for diregarding his injunction) to leave out the ſuperfluous letters, and I ſhall alſo for my own eaſe as well as that of the reader tranſcribe them in modern characters. The firſt lines of Wanley's extract from Ms. *Bod.* Junius. 1. [Cat. Codd. Mss. Septent. p. 59.] will anſwer my purpoſe as well as any other.

Nu, brother Walter, brother min after the fleſhes kinde,
And brother min i Criſtendom thurh fulluht and thurh trowthe,
And brother min i Godes hus yet o the thride wiſe,
Thurh that wit hafen taken ba an reghel boc to folghen

Under

by one *Orm*, or *Ormin*. It ſeems to have been conſidered as mere Proſe by Hickes and by Wanley, who have both given large extracts from it; but, I apprehend, every reader, who has an ear for metre, will eaſily perceive that it is written very exactly in verſes of fifteen ſyllables, without Rime, in imitation of the moſt common ſpecies of the Latin Tetrameter Iambic. The other piece [53], which is a moral Poem upon old age, &c. is in

Under kanunkes-had and lif ſwa ſum Sant Awſtin ſette,
Ic hafe don ſwa ſum thu bad, and *forbed*[a] te thin wille,
Ic hafe wend intil Engliſh godſpelles halighe lare,
After that little wit that me min Drihten hafeth lened—

The reader will obſerve, that, in calling theſe verſes of fifteen ſyllables, I conſider the words—*kinde, trowthe, wiſe, ſette, wille, lare*—as diſſyllables.

The laws of Metre require that they ſhould be ſo conſidered, as much as *folghen* and *lened:* and for the ſame reaſon *thride* in ver. 3 and *hafe* in ver. 6 and 7. are to be pronounced as conſiſting of two ſyllables.

It is the more extraordinary that neither Hickes nor Wanley ſhould have perceived that Ormin wrote in Metre, as he himſelf mentions his having added words for the ſake of *filling* his *Rime*, or *Verſe*, for he calls it by both thoſe names in the following paſſages:

Ic hafe ſett her o this boc among Godſpelles wordes
All thurh me ſelfen manig word, the *Rime* ſwa to *fillen*—

And again,

And ic ne mihte noht min *fers* ay with Godſpelles wordes
Wel *fillen* all, and all forthi ſholde ic wel ofte nede
Among Godſpelles wordes don min word, min *fers* to *fillen*—

It is ſcarce neceſſary to remark, that *Rime* is here to be underſtood in its original ſenſe, as denoting the whole verſe, and not merely the conſonancy of the final ſyllables. In the ſecond quotation *fers*, or *verſe*, is ſubſtituted for it as a ſynonymous term. Indeed I doubt whether, in the time of Ormin, the word *Rime* was, in any language, uſed ſingly to convey the idea of Conſonant terminations.

[53] A large extract from this Poem has been printed by Hickes [Gram. Ang. Sax. c. xxiv. p. 222.], but evidently from very incorrect Mss. It begins thus:

[a] r. *forbed*. Ms.

in Rime, and in a metre much reſembling the former, except that the verſe of fifteen ſyllables is broken into two, of which the firſt ſhould regularly contain eight and the ſecond ſeven ſyllables; but the metre is not ſo exactly obſerved, at leaſt in the copy which Hickes has followed, as it is in the *Ormulum*.

§ v. In the next interval, from the latter end of the reign of Henry III, to the middle of the fourteenth century, when we may ſuppoſe Chaucer was beginning to write, the number of Engliſh Rimers ſeems to have increaſed very much. Beſides ſeveral, whoſe names we know [54], it is probable that a great part of the anonymous Authors, or rather Tranſlators [55], of

Ic am nu elder thanne ic wes
A wintre and ec a lore;
Ic ealdi more thanne ic dede,
Mi wit oghte to bi more.

[54] Robert of Glouceſter and Robert of Brunne have been mentioned already.

To theſe may be added Richard Rolle, the hermite of Hampole, who died in 1349, after having compoſed a large quantity of Engliſh rimes. See Tanner, Bib. Brit. Art. HAMPOLE.—Laurence Minot, who has left a collection of Poems upon the principal events of the former part of the reign of Edward III. Ms. *Cotton.* Galba. E. ix.—Within the ſame period flouriſhed the two Poets, who are mentioned with great commendations by Robert of Brunne [App. to Pref. to Peter Langt. p. xcix.] under the names "Of Erceldoun and of Kendale." We have no memorial, that I know, remaining of the latter, beſides this paſſage; but the former I take to have been the famous Thomas Leirmouth, of Ercildoun (or Erſilton, as it is now called, in the ſhire of Merch,) who lived in the time of Edward I, and is generally diſtinguiſhed by the honourable addition of "The Rhymour." As the learned Editor of "Ancient Scottiſh Poems, Edinburgh, 1770," has, for irrefragable reaſons, deprived this Thomas of a Prophecy in verſe, which had uſually been aſcribed to him, [ſee Mackenzie, Art. THOMAS RHYMOUR,] I am inclined to make him ſome amends by attributing to him a Romance of "Sir Triſtrem;" of which Robert of Brunne, an excellent judge! [in the place above cited] ſays,

Over geſtes it has th'eſteem,
Over all that is or was,
If men it ſayd as made THOMAS.

[55] See Dr. Percy's curious *Catalogue of Engliſh Metrical Romances*, prefixed to the third Volume

of the popular Poems, which (from their having been originally written in the Roman, or French, language) were called Romances, flouriſhed about this

Volume of *Reliques of ancient Poeſy*. I am inclined to believe that we have no Engliſh Romance, prior to the age of Chaucer, which is not a tranſlation or imitation of ſome earlier French Romance. The principal of thoſe, which, being built upon Engliſh ſtories, bid the faireſt for having been originally compoſed in Engliſh, are alſo extant in French. A conſiderable fragment of *Horncbild*, or *Dan Horn* as he is there called, is to be found in French Alexandrines in Ms. *Harl.* 527. The firſt part of *Guy of Warwick* is in French, in the octoſyllable metre, in Ms. *Harl.* 3775. and the laſt part in the ſame language and metre in Ms. Bib. *Reg.* 8 F. ix. How much may be wanting I have not had opportunity to examine. I have never ſeen *Bevis* in French; but Du Freſnoy, in his *Biblioth. des Romans*, t. ii. p. 241. mentions a Ms. of *Le Roman de Beuves de Hantonne*, and another of *Le Roman de Beuves et Roſiane, en Rime*; and the Italians, who were certainly more likely to borrow from the French than from the Engliſh language, had got among them a Romance *di Buovo d'Antona* before the year 1348. Quadrio, Storia della Poeſia, t. vi. p. 542.

However, I think it extremely probable that theſe three Romances, though originally written in French, were compoſed in England, and perhaps by Engliſhmen; for we find that the general currency of the French language here engaged ſeveral of our own countrymen to uſe it in their compoſitions. Peter of Langtoft may be reckoned a dubious inſtance, as he is ſaid by ſome to have been a Frenchman; but Robert Groſſeteſte, the famous Biſhop of Lincoln in the time of Henry III, was a native of Suffolk, and yet he wrote his *Chaſteau d'Amours*, and his *Manuel des Pechées* in French. [Tanner's Bib. Brit. and Hearne's Pref. to Rob. of Glouceſter, p. lviii.]—There is a tranſlation of *Cato* in French verſe by *Helis de Guinceſtre*, i. e. Wincheſter, Ms. *Harl.* 4388. and a Romance alſo in French verſe, which I ſuppoſe to be the original of the Engliſh *Ipomedon* [Percy's Cat. n. 22.] by *Hue de Rotelande*, is to found in Ms. *Cotton.* Veſp. A. vii.—A French Dialogue in verſe, Ms. *Bod.* 3904. entitled, "*La pleinte par entre mis Sire Henry de Lacy Counte de Ni-*" *chole et Sire Wauter de Bybeleſworth pur la croiſerie en la terre Seinte,*" was moſt probably compoſed by the latter, who has alſo left us another work in French proſe. [See his article in Tanner, Bibl. Brit.]—Even as late as the time of Chaucer, Gower wrote his *Speculum meditantis* in French, but whether in verſe or proſe is uncertain. John Stowe, who was a diligent ſearcher after Mss. had never ſeen this work [Annals, p. 326.]: nor does either Bale or Pits ſet down the beginning of it, as they generally do of the books which they have had in their hands. However, one French Poem of Gower's has been preſerved. In Ms. *Harl.* 3869. it is connected with the *Confeſſio Amantis* by the following rubric: "Puiſqu'il ad dit cidevant en Englois par voie d'eſſample la ſotie de cellui qui par amours aime par eſpecial, dirra ore apres en Francois a tout le monde en general une traitie ſelonc les auc-

tours,

this time. It is unneceſſary to enter into particulars here concerning any of them, as they do not appear to have invented, or imported from abroad, any new modes of Verſification, by which the Art coud be at all advanced [56], or even to have improved thoſe which were before in uſe. On

tours, pour eſſampler les amants marriez, au fin q'ils la foi de leurs ſeints eſpouſailles pourront par fine loialte guarder, et al honeur de dieu ſalvement tenir." Pr. *Le creatour de toute creature*. It contains LV Stanzas of 7 verſes each, in the laſt of which is the following apology for the language:

" Al' univerſite de tout le monde
Johan Gower ceſte Balade envoie,
Et ſi jeo nai de Francois la faconde,
Pardonetz moi qe jeo de ceo forſvoie;
Jeo ſuis Englois, ſi quier par tiele voie
Eſtre excuſe——."

Chaucer himſelf ſeems to have had no great opinion of the performances of his countrymen in French. [Prol. to Teſt. of Love, ed. 1542.] " Certes (ſays he) there ben ſome that ſpeke theyr poyſy mater in Frenche, of whyche ſpeche the Frenche men have as good a fantaſye, as we have in hearing of French mennes Englyſhe." And he afterwards concludes with his uſual good ſenſe. " Let then Clerkes endyten in Latyn, for they have the propertye of ſcience and the knowinge in that facultye; and lette Frenchmen in theyr Frenche alſo endyte theyr queynt termes, for it is kyndly to theyr mouthes; and let us ſhewe our fantaſyes in ſuche wordes as we lerneden of our dames tonge."

[56] It was neceſſary to qualify the aſſertion, that the Rimers of this period " did not invent or import from abroad any new modes of Verſification," as, in fact, Robert of Brunne (in the paſſage referred to in n. 54.) has mentioned three or four ſorts of verſe, different from any which we have hitherto met with, and which appear to have been much cultivated, if not introduced, by the writers who flouriſhed a little before himſelf. He calls them *Couwee*, *Strangere*, *Enterlace*, and *Baſton*. Mr. Bridges, in a ſenſible letter to Thomas Hearne [App. to Pref. to Peter Langt. p. ciii.] pointed out theſe terms as particularly " needing an explanation;" but Thomas choſe rather to ſtuff his book with accounts *of the Nunnery at Little Gidding*, &c. which coſt him only the labour of tranſcribing. There can be little doubt, I think, that the Rimes called *Couwée* and *Enterlacée* were derived from the *Verſus Caudati* and *Interlaqueati* of the Latin Rimers of that age. Though Robert of Brunne in his Prologue profeſſes not to attempt theſe elegancies of compoſition, yet he has intermixed

On the contrary, as their works were intended for the ear more than for the eye, to be recited rather than read, they were apt to be more attentive to their Rimes than to the exactneſs of their Metres, from a preſumption, I ſuppoſe, that the defect, or redundance, of a ſyllable might be eaſily covered in the recitation, eſpecially if accompanied, as it often was, by ſome muſical inſtrument.

§ VI. Such was, in general, the ſtate of Engliſh Poetry at the time when Chaucer probably made his firſt eſſays. The uſe of Rime was eſtabliſhed; not excluſively (for the Author of the "Viſions of Pierce Ploughman" wrote after the year 1350 [57] without Rime,) but very generally; ſo that

mixed ſeveral paſſages in Rime *Couwée*; [ſee p. 266. 273, 6, 7, 8, 9, et al.] and almoſt all the latter part of his work from the Conqueſt is written in Rime *Enterlacée*, each couplet riming in the middle as well as at the end. [This was the nature of the *Verſus interlaqueati*, according to the following ſpecimen, Ms. *Harl.* 1002.

Plauſus Grecorum | lux cecis et via claudis |
Incola celorum | virgo digniſſima laudis.]

I cannot pretend to define the exact form of the Rime called *Baſton*, but I dare ſay it received its appellation from the Carmelite, *Robert Baſton*, a celebrated Latin Rimer in the reigns of Edward I. and II. [See Tanner, Bibl. Brit. in v. and Hearne's Pref. to Fordun, p. ccxxvi. et ſeq.] His verſes upon the battle of Bannockburn, in 1313, are printed in the Appendix to Fordun, p. 1570. They afford inſtances of all the whimſical combinations of Rimes which can well be conceived to find a place in the Latin heroic metre.

As to Rime *Strangere*, I ſuſpect (upon conſidering the whole paſſage in Robert of Brunne) that it was rather a general name, including all ſorts of *uncommon* Rimes, than appropriated to any particular ſpecies.

Upon the whole, if this account of theſe new modes of Verſification ſhall be allowed to be any thing like the truth, I hope I ſhall be thought juſtified in having added, "that the Art coud not be at all advanced by them."

[57] This is plain from fol. 68. edit. 1550. where the year 1350 is named, as a year of great ſcarcity. Indeed, from the mention of the Kitten in the tale of the Rattons, fol. iii. iiii. I ſhould ſuſpect that the author wrote at the very end of the reign of Edward III, when Richard was become heir apparent.

The Viſions *of* (i. e. *concerning*) Pierce Ploughman are generally aſcribed to one *Robert Langland*;

that in this reſpect he had little to do but to imitate his predeceſſors. The Metrical part of our Poetry was capable of more improvement, by the poliſhing of the meaſures already in uſe as well as by the introducing of new modes of verſification; and how far Chaucer actually contributed to the improvement of it, in both or either of theſe particulars, we are now to conſider.

§ VII. With reſpect to the regular Metres then in uſe, they may be reduced, I think, to four. Firſt, the long Iambic Metre [58], conſiſting of not more

Langland; but the beſt Mss. that I have ſeen, make the Chriſtian name of the author *William*, without mentioning his ſurname. So in Ms. *Cotton*. Veſp. B. xvi. at the end of p. 1. is this rubric. "Hic incipit ſecundus paſſus de viſione *Willelmi* de Petro Plouhman." And in ver. 5. of p. 2. inſtead of, "*And ſayde*; ſonne, *ſlepeſt thou?*" The Ms. has, "*And ſayde*; Wille, *ſlepeſt thou?*" See alſo the account of Ms. *Harl.* 2376. in the Harleian Catalogue.

I cannot help obſerving, that theſe Viſions have been printed from ſo faulty and imperfect a Ms. that the author, whoever he was, would find it difficult to recognize his own work. However, the judgement of the learned Doctors, Hickes and Percy, [Gram. A. S. p. 217.—Rel. of Anc. Poet. v. ii. p. 260.] with reſpect to the laws of his verſification, is confirmed by the Mss. Each of his verſes is in fact a diſtich, compoſed of two verſes, after the Saxon form, without Rime, and not reducible to any certain Metre. I do not mean to ſay, that a few of his verſes may not be picked out, conſiſting of fourteen and fifteen ſyllables, and reſembling the metre uſed in the *Ormulum*; and there are ſtill more of twelve and thirteen ſyllables, which might paſs for very tolerable Alexandrines: but then, on the other hand, there is a great number of his verſes (warranted for genuine by the beſt Mss.) which cannot, by any mode of pronunciation, be extended beyond nine or ten ſyllables; ſo that it is impoſſible to imagine, that his verſe was intended to conſiſt of any determinate number of ſyllables. It is as clear that his Accents, upon which the harmony of modern Rythms depends, are not diſpoſed according to any regular ſyſtem. The firſt diviſion of a verſe is often Trochaic, and the laſt Iambic; and *vice verſâ*. The only rule, which he ſeems really to have preſcribed to himſelf, is what has been taken notice of by his firſt Editor, viz. "to have three wordes at the leaſte in every verſe whiche beginne with ſome one letter." Crowley's Pref. to Edit. 1550.

[58] The moſt perfect example of this metre has been given above, n. 52, from the *Ormulum*. Each verſe is compoſed of fifteen ſyllables, and broken by a *Cæſura* at the eighth, which always

more than fifteen, nor leſs than fourteen ſyllables, and broken by a *Cæſura* at the eighth ſyllable. Secondly, the Alexandrin Metre [59], conſiſting of

always terminates a word. The accents are ſo diſpoſed upon the even ſyllables, particularly the eighth and fourteenth, as to produce the true Iambic Cadence.

The learned reader will recollect, that the *Political verſes*, as they are called, of Tzetzes, and others, who wrote when the Greek verſification was become Rythmical inſtead of Metrical, are *chiefly* of this form. See Du Cange, v. POLITICI VERSUS. And it is remarkable, that, about the time of our Orm, Ciullo d'Alcamo, a Poet of Sicily, where the Greek was ſtill a living language, [Montf. Palæog. Gr. l. vi.] made uſe of theſe verſes of fifteen ſyllables, intermixed with Hendecaſyllables, in the only production of his which has been preſerved. Raccolta dell' Allacci, p. 408—16. The firſt Stanza is quoted by Creſcimbeni, [Iſtor. d. V. P. l. i. p. 3.] who however labours very much to perſuade us that the verſes in queſtion ought not to be conſidered as verſes of fifteen ſyllables, but as containing each of them two verſes, the one of eight and the other of ſeven ſyllables. If this were allowed, the nature of the verſe would not be altered: [See before, p. 67.] but the ſuppoſition is highly improbable, as by that diſtribution there would be three verſes in each Stanza not riming. In what follows, Creſcimbeni ſhews very plainly that he had not adverted to the real nature of Ciullo's meaſure, for he compares it with the noted tetrameter, "Gallias Cæſar ſubegit, Nicomedes Cæſarem," which is a *Trochaic*, whereas theſe verſes of Ciullo are evidently *Iambics*, like thoſe of Orm.

I ſuſpect, that, if we coud recover the genuine text of Robert of Glouceſter, he would be found to have written in this Metre. It was uſed by Warner, in his *Albions England* (another Chronicle in verſe) in the latter end of Q. Elizabeth's reign; and Gaſcoigne about the ſame time [*Inſtruction concerning the making of verſe in Eng.* Signature U. ii.] ſpeaks of the couplet, conſiſting of one verſe of twelve and another of fourteen ſyllables, as *the commoneſt ſort of verſe* then in uſe. It may be proper to obſerve, that the metre, which Gaſcoigne calls a verſe of fourteen ſyllables, is exactly the ſame with what is called above a verſe of fifteen ſyllables; juſt as the French Alexandrin may be compoſed indifferently of twelve or thirteen ſyllables, and the Italian Hendecaſyllable of ten, eleven, or even twelve. The general rule in all theſe kinds of verſe is, that, when they conſiſt of the greater number of ſyllables, the ſuperfluous ſyllables, as they may be called, are never accented.

[59] Robert of Brunne, in his tranſlation of *Peter of Langtoft*, ſeems to have uſed the *Alexandrin* verſe in imitation of his Original; but his Metre (at leaſt in Hearne's copy) is frequently defective, eſpecially in the latter part of his work, where he affects to rime at the *Cæſura* as well as at the end of his verſe.

of not more than thirteen ſyllables, nor leſs than twelve, with a *Cæſura* at the ſixth. Thirdly, the Octoſyllable Metre; which was in reality the antient Dimeter Iambic. Fourthly, the Stanza of ſix verſes; of which the firſt, ſecond, fourth, and fifth, were in the complete Octoſyllable Metre; and the third and laſt catalectic, i. e. wanting a ſyllable, or even two.

§ VIII. In the firſt of theſe Metres it does not appear that Chaucer ever compoſed at all, (for, I preſume, no one can imagine that he was the author of Gamelyn,) or in the ſecond; and in the fourth we have nothing of his but the Rime of Sire Thopas, which, being intended to ridicule the vulgar Romancers, ſeems to have been purpoſely written in their favourite Metre. In the third, or Octoſyllable Metre [60], he has left ſeveral compoſitions;

The Alexandrin metre is generally agreed to have been firſt uſed in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, by Lambert li Cors and Alexandre de Bernay, toward the latter end of the twelfth Century. Du Verdier, Bibl. p. 780. Fauchet, l. ii. A late French Antiquary (M. L'Eveque de la Ravaliere,) in his hiſtory *Des revolutions de la langue Françoiſe*, p. 165. has combated this opinion, upon the authority of ſome Alexandrin verſes, which he has diſcovered, as he ſuppoſes, in the *Roman de Rou*. I ſhall only obſerve, that no ſuch verſes are to be found in a very good Ms. of the *Roman de Rou*, Bib. *Reg.* 4 C. xi. and I very much ſuſpect that upon an accurate examination they will appear to have been not the work of *Wace*, but of ſome later author. A ſimilar miſtake of an interpolation, or continuation, for the original work has led another very able Antiquary of the ſame nation to place the *Roman de Rou* in the fourteenth Century. Mem. de l'Acad. des I. et B. L. tom. xv. p. 582. There can be no doubt, that *Wace* wrote the *Roman de Rou* about the middle of the twelfth Century. See before, n. 47.

They who attend only to the length of the Alexandrin verſe, will naturally derive it from the Trimeter Iambic rythms, which were in frequent uſe in the beginning of the twelfth Century. See Orderic. Vital. l. ii. p. 404. 409, 410. 415, et al. But when it is conſidered, that the *Cæſura* at the ſixth ſyllable, ſo eſſential to the Alexandrin metre, was hardly ever obſerved in the Trimeter Iambic, it will ſeem more probable, I think, that the inventor of the Alexandrin took for his model, what has been called above, the long Iambic, but, for ſome reaſon or other, retrenched a foot, or two ſyllables, in the firſt hemiſtich.

[60] Though I call this the Octoſyllable Metre from what I apprehend to have been its original

poſitions; particularly, " an imperfect Tranſlation of the *Roman de la Roſe*," which was, probably, one of his earlieſt performances; " the Houſe of Fame;"

original form, it often conſiſts of nine and ſometimes of ten ſyllables; but the eighth is always the laſt accented ſyllable.

The oldeſt French poems, to the latter end of the twelfth Century, are all in this metre; but upon the invention of the Alexandrin, the octoſyllable verſe ſeems by degrees to have been confined to the ſeveral ſpecies of lighter compoſitions, in which it is ſtill uſed. Here in England, Robert of Brunne, in his Preface to his tranſlation of *Le Brut* [App. to Pref. to Peter Langtoft, p. c.] calls it "*light rime*," in contradiſtinction to " ſtrange rime," of which he has juſt enumerated ſeveral ſorts [ſee n. 56.]; and ſays, that he wrote in it " for luf of the lewed man:" and Chaucer himſelf ſpeaks of it in nearly the ſame terms in the beginning of the third book of the *Houſe of Fame*.

" God of ſcience and of light,
Apollo, thurgh thy grete might
This little laſt book now thou gye;
Not that I will for mayſtrye
Here art potential be ſhewde;
But, for the ryme is *light and lewde*,
Yet make it ſomewhat agreable,
Though ſome verſe fayle in a ſyllable."

The learned Editor of a part of the Canterbury Tales [London, 1737, 8vo.] has quoted this paſſage [Pref. p. xxv.] as proving, " by Chaucer's own confeſſion, that he did not write in equal meaſure."

It certainly proves, that he did not write in equal meaſure *in this particular poem* of the Houſe of Fame; but it proves alſo, that he knew well what the laws of meaſure were, and that he thought that any deviation from them required an apology. Is it juſt to conclude, becauſe Chaucer has owned a neglect of thoſe laws in one work, written in light metre, and in which he formally diſclaims any exertion of art [ver. 4, 5.] that therefore he has been equally negligent of them in his other works, written in the graveſt metre, and in which he may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have employed his utmoſt ſkill of verſification? In the Troilus, for inſtance, [b. v.] he has a ſolemn prayer, " that none miſwrite, or *miſmetre* his book." Can we ſuppoſe that it was not originally written in Metre?— But I ſhall not enter any further into the general argument concerning Chaucer's verſification, which will more properly be diſcuſſed in the text. My buſineſs here was only to prevent the reader from coming to the queſtion with a preconceived opinion (upon the au-

Fame;" "the Dethe of the Ducheſſe Blanche," and a poem called his "Dreme:" upon all which it will be ſufficient here to obſerve in general, that, if he had given no other proofs of his poetical faculty, theſe alone muſt have ſecured to him the pre-eminence, above all his predeceſſors and contemporaries, in point of Verſification.

§ IX. But by far the moſt conſiderable part of Chaucer's works is written in that kind of Metre which we now call the Heroic [61], either in

thority of the learned Editor above-mentioned) that "Chaucer himſelf," in this paſſage of the Houſe of Fame, "has put the matter out of diſpute."

To return again to the Octoſyllable Metre. Its conſtitution is ſuch, that the firſt ſyllable may often be dropped without much prejudice to the harmony of the verſe; and as far as I have obſerved, that is the ſyllable in which Chaucer's verſes of this kind generally fail. We have an inſtance in the firſt line of the paſſage quoted above—

God of ſcience and of light—

ſounds as well (to my ear at leaſt) as—

Thou God of ſcience and of light—

according to Mr. Urry's correction. The reaſon, I apprehend, is, that the meaſure, though of another ſort, is ſtill regular: inſtead of a Dimeter Iambic, it is a Dimeter Trochaic Catalectic.

But no ſuch liberty can be taken in the Heroic Metre without totally deſtroying its harmony; and therefore when the abovementioned learned Editor ſays [Pref. p. xxvi.] that the numbers of Chaucer "are always muſical, whether they want or exceed their complement," I doubt his partiality for his author has carried him too far. I have no conception myſelf that an heroic verſe, which wants a ſyllable of its complement, can be muſical, or even tolerable. The line which he has quoted from the Knightes Tale [ver. 1228 of this Edition],

Not in purgatory but in helle—

however you manage it; (whether you make a pauſe; or give two times to the firſt ſyllable, as he rather adviſes;)—can never paſs for a verſe of any form. Nor did Chaucer intend that it ſhould. He wrote (according to the beſt Mss.)—

Not *only* in purgatory but in helle.

[61] The Heroic Metre with us, as with the Italians, is of the Iambic form, and conſiſts of ten, eleven, or twelve ſyllables; the tenth, however, being in all caſes the laſt accented ſyllable,

in Diſtichs or in Stanzas; and as I have not been able to diſcover any inſtance of this metre being uſed by any Engliſh poet before him, I am much inclined to ſuppoſe that he was the firſt introducer of it into our language. It had long been practiſed in France, in the Northern as well as the Southern provinces; and in Italy, within the laſt fifty years before Chaucer wrote, it had been cultivated with the greateſt aſſiduity and ſucceſs, in preference to every other metre, by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace. When we reflect that two of Chaucer's juvenile productions, the Palamon and Arcite, and the Troilus, were in a manner tranſlated from the *Theſeida* and the *Filoſtrato* of Boccace[62], both written

ble. The French have the ſame Metre; but with them it can ſcarce contain more than eleven ſyllables, as their language has few (if any) words, in which the accent is laid upon the Antepenultima. Though we have a great number of ſuch words, we ſeldom uſe the verſe of twelve ſyllables. The extraordinary difficulty of riming with three ſyllables is a ſufficient reaſon for excluding it from all works which are written in Rime, and in Blank Metre the two unaccented ſyllables at the end make the cloſe of the verſe heavy and languid. Milton, for the ſake of variety of meaſure, has inſerted a very few of theſe verſes, which the Italians call *Sdruccioli*, in his heroic poems; but they are more commonly and, I think, more properly employed in Dramatic compoſitions, where a continued ſtatelineſs of numbers is leſs requiſite.

The generical name for this Metre in Italy is *Endecaſyllabo*; and the verſes of ten and twelve ſyllables are diſtinguiſhed by additions; the former being called *Endecaſyllabo tronco*, and the latter *Endecaſyllabo ſdrucciolo*. This proves, I think, that the verſe of eleven ſyllables was the primitive metre, and principally uſed, as it ſtill is, in Italy; and it will appear hereafter, if I am not miſtaken, that the greateſt part of Chaucer's heroic verſes, when properly written and pronounced, are in this meaſure.

[62] It is ſo little a while ſince the world has been informed, that the Palamon and Arcite of Chaucer was taken from the *Theſeida* of Boccace, that it would not have been ſurpriſing if another century had elapſed without our knowing that our countryman had alſo borrowed his Troilus from the *Filoſtrato* of the ſame author; as the *Filoſtrato* is more ſcarce, and much leſs famous, even in Italy, than the *Theſeida*. The firſt ſuſpicion which I entertained of this theft was from reading the title of the *Filoſtrato* at large, in *Saxii* Hiſt. Lit. Typog. Mediolan. *ad an.* 1498; and I afterwards found, in Montfaucon's Bibl. Mss. t. ii. P. 793. among the King of France's Mss. one with this title, "*Philoſtrato, dell' amoroſe*

written in the common Italian hendecaſyllable verſe, it cannot but appear extremely probable that his metre alſo was copied from the ſame original; and yet I cannot find that the form of his Stanza in the Troilus, conſiſting of ſeven verſes, was ever uſed by Boccace, though it is to be met with among the poems of the King of Navarre, and of the *Provençal* Rimers [63].

Which-

amoroſe fatiche di Troilo per Gio Boccaccio." See alſo Quadrio, t. vi. p. 473. I had juſt employed a perſon to procure me ſome account of this Ms. from Paris, when I had the good fortune to meet with a printed copy in the very curious Collection of the Reverend Mr. Crofts. The title is " Il Fyloſtrato, che tracta de lo innamoramento de Troylo e Gryſeida: et de molte altre infinite battaglie. Impreſſo nella inclita cita de Milano per magiſtro Uldericho Scinzenzeler nell anno M. CCCC lxxxxviii. a di xxvii. di meſe de Septembre, in 4°." By the favour of the learned owner (who is as free in the communication, as he has been zealous in the collection, of his literary treaſures) I had ſoon an opportunity of ſatisfying myſelf, that Chaucer was to the full as much obliged to Boccace in his Troilus as in his Knightes Tale.

The doubts which Quadrio mentions [t. vi. p. 474.], whether the *Filoſtrato* was really a work of Boccace, are ſufficiently anſwered, as he obſerves, by the concurring teſtimony of ſeveral antient Mss. which expreſsly name him as the author. And it may be remarked, that Boccace himſelf, in his Decameron, has made the ſame honourable mention of this Poem as of the *Theſeida*; though without acknowledging either for his own. In the introduction to the Sixth Day, he ſays, that " Dioneo inſieme con Lauretta *di Troilo et di Chriſeida* cominciarono cantare," juſt as afterwards, in the concluſion of the Seventh Day, we are told, that the ſame " Dioneo et la Fiammetta gran pezza cantarono inſieme *d'Arcita et di Palemone.*"

[63] See *Poeſies du Roi de Navarre*, Chanſ. xvi. xviii. xxvii. xxxiii. lviii. The only difference is, that the two laſt verſes, which in Chaucer's Stanza form a diſtinct couplet, are made by Thibaut to rime with the firſt and third. In a Ms. of Provençal poetry (in the Collection of the Reverend Mr. Crofts), I find one piece by Folket de Marſeilles, who died about 1213, in which the Stanza is formed exactly agreeable to Chaucer's.

This Stanza of ſeven verſes, being firſt introduced, I apprehend, by Chaucer, was long the favourite meaſure of the Poets who ſucceeded him. In the time of Gaſcoigne it had acquired the name of *Rithme royall*; *and ſurely*, ſays he, *it is a royall kinde of verſe ſerving beſt for grave diſcourſes.* [Inſtruction concerning the making of verſe. Sign. U. 1. b.] Milton, in ſome of his juvenile compoſitions, has made the laſt verſe of this Stanza an Alexandrin.

As

Whichever he ſhall be ſuppoſed to have followed, whether the French or Italians, it is certain that he coud not want in either language a number of models of correct and harmonious verſification; and the only queſtion will be, whether he had ability and induſtry enough to imitate that part of their excellency.

§ x. In diſcuſſing this queſtion we ſhould always have in mind, that the correctneſs and harmony of an Engliſh verſe depends entirely upon its being compoſed of a certain number of ſyllables, and its having the accents of thoſe ſyllables properly placed. In order therefore to form any judgement of the Verſification of Chaucer, it is neceſſary that we ſhould know the ſyllabical value, if I may uſe the expreſſion, of his words, and the accentual value of his ſyllables, as they were commonly pronounced [64] in his time; for without that knowledge, it is not more probable that we ſhould determine juſtly upon the exactneſs of his metres, than that we ſhould be able to caſt up rightly an account ſtated in coins of a former age, of whoſe current rates and denominations we are totally ignorant.

§ xi. Let

As the *Theſeida* and the *Filoſtrato* of Boccace are both written in the Octave Stanza, of which he is often, though improperly, called the inventor [ſee Paſquier, *Recherches*, l. vii. c. 3.] it ſeems extraordinary that Chaucer ſhould never have adopted that Stanza. Even when he uſes a Stanza of eight verſes (as in the Monkes Tale), it is conſtituted very differently from the Italian Octave. I obſerve, by the way, that Chaucer's Stanza of eight verſes, with the addition of an Alexandrin, is the Stanza in which Spenſer has compoſed his *Faery Queen*.

[64] Monſ. l'Eveque de la Ravaliere, in his Diſcourſe *de l'ancienneté des Chanſons Françoiſes*, prefixed to the *Poëſies du Roi de Navarre*, has the ſame obſervation with reſpect to the old French poets. *Leur Poëſie* (ſays he, p. 227.) *marque combien ils reſpectoient cette régle* [of exact riming]; *mais pour en juger aujourd'hui*, ainſi que de la meſure de leurs Vers, *il faut prononcer les mots comme eux*:—He is vindicating the antient French bards from an unjuſt and ignorant cenſure of Boileau, in his *Art Poet.* Chant. i. So that, it ſhould ſeem, a great Poet is not of courſe a judicious Antiquary. See above, n. 4. a cenſure of Chaucer's verſe by our Dryden, who was certainly a *great Poet*.

§ XI. Let us conſider a moment, how a ſenſible critic in the Auguſtan age would have proceeded, if called upon to examine a work of Ennius [65]. When he found that a great proportion of the verſes were ſtrictly conformable to the ordinary rules of Metre, he would, probably, not ſcruple to conclude that ſuch a conformity muſt have been produced by art and deſign, and not by mere chance. On the other hand, when he found, that in ſome verſes the number of feet, to appearance, was either deficient or redundant; that in others the feet were ſeemingly compoſed of too few or too many ſyllables, of ſhort ſyllables in the place of long, or of long in the place of ſhort; he would not, I think, immediately condemn the old Bard, as having all at once forgotten the fundamental principles of his art, or as having wilfully or negligently deviated from them. He would firſt, I preſume, enquire, whether all theſe irregularities were in the genuine text of his author, or only the miſtakes of Copyiſts: he would enquire further, by comparing the genuine text with other contemporary writings and monuments, whether many things, which appeared irregular, were not in truth ſufficiently regular, either juſtified by the conſtant practice, or excuſed by the allowed licence of the age: where authority failed, he would have recourſe, but ſoberly, to etymology and analogy; and if after all a few paſſages remained, not reducible to the ſtrict laws of Metre by any of the methods above-mentioned, if he were really (as I have ſuppoſed him) a ſenſible critic, he would be apt rather to expect patiently the ſolution of his difficulties from more correct manuſcripts, or a more complete theory of his author's verſification, than to cut the knot, by deciding peremptorily,

[65] Though Ennius died not an hundred and fifty years before what may be called the age of Auguſtus, his language and verſification are ſo different from thoſe of Ovid, for inſtance, that I much queſtion whether his poems were better reliſhed, or even underſtood, by the vulgar Romans in that age, than the works of Chaucer are now by the generality of readers. However a great many of his verſes are as ſmoothly turned as thoſe of Ovid himſelf, and it is well known, that Virgil has not ſcrupled to incorporate ſeveral of them into his divine Æneid. At the ſame time, whoever caſts an eye over the Fragments of his Annals, as collected by Columna, Heſſelius, and others, will find frequent examples of all the ſeeming irregularities alluded to in the text.

peremptorily, that the work was compoſed without any regard to metrical rules.

§ XII. I beg leave to purſue the ſame courſe with reſpect to Chaucer. The great number of verſes, ſounding complete even to our ears, which is to be found in all the leaſt corrected copies of his works, authoriſes us to conclude, that he was not ignorant of the laws of metre. Upon this concluſion it is impoſſible not to ground a ſtrong preſumption, that he intended to obſerve the ſame laws in the many other verſes which ſeem to us irregular; and if this was really his intention, what reaſon can be aſſigned ſufficient to account for his having failed ſo groſsly and repeatedly, as is generally ſuppoſed, in an operation, which every Balladmonger in our days, man, woman, or child, is known to perform with the moſt unerring exactneſs, and without any extraordinary fatigue?

§ XIII. The offences againſt metre in an Engliſh verſe, as has partly been obſerved before, muſt ariſe either from a ſuperfluity or deficiency of ſyllables, or from the accents being improperly placed.

§ XIV. With reſpect to the firſt ſpecies of irregularity, I have not taken notice of any ſuperfluities in Chaucer's verſes, but what may be reduced to juſt meaſure by the uſual practices [66] of even modern Poets. And this, by

[66] It is unneceſſary to trouble the Reader with an enumeration of Syncope, Apoſtrophus, Synecphoneſis, &c.

Quicquid habent telorum armamentaria vatum.

They may all, I think, be comprehended in our language under this one general principle, that an Engliſh verſe, though chiefly compoſed of feet of two ſyllables, is capable of receiving feet of three ſyllables in every part of it, provided only one of the three ſyllables be accented.

In ſhort, whoever can taſte the metrical harmony of the following lines of Milton, will not be embarraſſed how to diſpoſe of the (ſeemingly) ſuperfluous ſyllables, which he may meet with in Chaucer.

by the way, is a ſtrong proof of his real attention to metrical rules; for otherwiſe, if he had written without any reſtraint of that kind, a certain proportion of his deviations from meaſure muſt, in all probability, have been on the ſide of exceſs.

§ xv. But a great number of Chaucer's verſes labour under an apparent deficiency of a ſyllable, or two. In ſome of theſe perhaps the defect may ſtill be ſupplied from Mss. but for the greateſt part I am perſuaded no ſuch aſſiſtance is to be expected [67]; and therefore, ſuppoſing the text in theſe caſes to be correct, it is worth conſidering whether the verſe alſo may not be made correct, by adopting in certain words a pronunciation, different indeed from modern practice, but which, we have reaſon to believe, was uſed by the author himſelf.

For inſtance, in the Genitive caſe Singular and the Plural Number of Nouns (which, as has been remarked above, in the time of Chaucer had the ſame expreſſion), there can be no doubt that ſuch words as, *ſhoures*, ver. 1. *croppes*, ver. 7. *ſhires*, ver. 15. *lordes*, ver. 47, &c. were regularly pronounced as conſiſting of two ſyllables. Whenever they are uſed as monoſyllables, it muſt be conſidered as a Poetical Licence, warranted however even then (as we may preſume from the natural progreſs of our language) by the practice of inaccurate ſpeakers in common converſation. In

P. L. ii. 123. Óminous | conjecture on the whole ſucceſs.
302. A pil | lar of ſtáte | ; deep on his front engraven—
658. Celeſtial ſpir | its in bón | dage, nor the abyſs—
v. 495. No inconvenient di | et, nor tóo | light fare.
vii. 122. Things not revealed, which the inviſ | ible Kíng—

[67] I would not be thought to undervalue the Mss. which I have not ſeen, or to diſcourage thoſe who may have inclination and opportunity to conſult them. I only mean to ſay, that, where the text is ſupported (as it generally is in this Edition) by the concurrence of two or three good Mss. and the ſenſe is clear and complete, we may ſafely conſider it as tolerably correct. In the courſe of the Notes, I ſhall have occaſion to point out ſeveral paſſages, in which either the diſagreement of the good Mss. or the obſcurity of their readings, makes a further enquiry abſolutely neceſſary in order to ſettle the text.

In like manner, we may be ſure that *ed*, the regular termination of the Paſt Tenſe and its Participle, made, or contributed to make, a ſecond ſyllable in the words, *perced*, ver. 2. *bathed*, ver. 3. *loved*, ver. 45. *wered*, ver. 75, &c.[68] The firſt ſtep toward reducing words of this form to Monoſyllables ſeems to have been to ſhorten the laſt ſyllable, either by tranſpoſing the final letters, as in—*wolde*, ver. 144. *ſayde*, ver. 763. &c. or by throwing away the *d*, as in—*coſte*, ver. 1910. *caſte*, ver. 2083, &c. In both theſe caſes the words ſtill remained of two ſyllables, the final *e* being ſounded as an *e* feminine; but they were prepared to loſe their laſt ſyllable by the eaſy licence of changing an *e* feminine into an *e* mute, or of dropping it entirely, according to the modern practice.

§ XVI. But nothing will be found of ſuch extenſive uſe for ſupplying the deficiencies of Chaucer's metre as the pronunciation of the *e* feminine; and

[68] It appears from the Preface to the laſt Edition of Chaucer's Works, Lond. 1721, that Mr. Urry, the undertaker of that Edition, had the ſame opinion with reſpect to the pronunciation of the final ſyllables in this and the laſt mentioned inſtance; and that it was his intention to diſtinguiſh thoſe ſyllables, *whenever they were to be pronounced*, by printing them with an *i*, inſtead of an *e*; as, *ſhouris*, *ſhiris*, *percid*, *lovid*, &c. As ſuch a diſtinction is entirely unſupported by the Mss. and muſt neceſſarily very much diſfigure the orthography of the language, I cannot think that an Editor has a right to introduce it upon ever ſo plauſible a pretence. A ſhorter and (in my opinion) a leſs exceptionable method would have been to have diſtinguiſhed the ſyllables of this ſort, *whenever they were to be contracted*, by adding a ſign of Syncope, thus; *ſhoure's*, *ſhire's*, *perce'd*, *love'd*. But after all a reader, who cannot perform ſuch operations for himſelf, had better not trouble his head about the Verſification of Chaucer.

Mr. Urry had alſo diſcovered, that the final *e* (of which I ſhall treat more at large in the next Section) often made a ſyllable in Chaucer's verſe; and (according to the Preface quoted above) he "always marked with an accent, when he judged it neceſſary to pronounce it; as, ſwetè, halvè, ſmalè, ver. 5, 8, 9." I have the ſame objection to this mark that I have to innovations in orthography; and beſides, that it would be apt to miſlead the ignorant reader (for whom only it can be intended), by making him ſuppoſe that the *e* ſo marked was really to be accented, whereas the true *e* feminine is always to be pronounced with an obſcure evaneſcent ſound, and is incapable of bearing any ſtreſs or accent.

and as that pronunciation has been for a long time totally antiquated, it may be proper here to ſuggeſt ſome reaſons for believing (independently of any arguments to be drawn from the practice of Chaucer himſelf) that the final *e* in our antient language was very generally pronounced, as the *e* feminine is at this day by the French.

With reſpect to words imported directly from France, it is certainly quite natural to ſuppoſe, that, for ſome time, they retained their native pronunciation; whether they were Nouns ſubſtantive, as, *hoſte*, ver. 753. *face*, ver. 1580, &c.—or Adjectives, as, *large*, ver. 755. *ſtrange*, ver. 13, &c.—or Verbs, as, *grante*, ver. 12756. *preche*, ver. 12327, &c. and it cannot be doubted, that in theſe and other ſimilar words in the French language, the final *e* was always pronounced, as it ſtill is, ſo as to make them diſſyllables.

We have not indeed ſo clear a proof of the original pronunciation of the Saxon part [69] of our language; but we know, from general obſervation, that all changes of pronunciation are uſually made by ſmall degrees; and therefore, when we find that a great number of thoſe words, which in Chaucer's time ended in *e*, originally ended in *a*, we may reaſonably preſume,

[69] This is owing to the Saxons not having left us any metrical compoſitions, as has been obſerved before, p. 47. Hickes complains [Gr. A. S. c. xxiii. §. 7.], "that it is difficult to know of how many ſyllables a Saxon verſe ſometimes conſiſts, for this reaſon among others, *quod non conſtat quomodo voces in* e *fœminino vel obſcuro terminatæ pronuntiandæ ſunt in carmine.*" He might, perhaps with more propriety, have complained, that it is difficult to know how words ending in *e* feminine are to be pronounced in a Saxon verſe, becauſe it is uncertain of how many ſyllables any of their verſes conſiſted. I have mentioned in the text two caſes of words abbreviated, in which I think we might conclude from general reaſoning that the final *e* was pronounced. As this Theory, with reſpect to theſe words, is entirely confirmed by the practice of Orm (the moſt authentic metrical compoſer that we have in our antient language) it would not perhaps be unreaſonable to infer, that the practice of Orm, in other words of Saxon original, in which the final *e* is pronounced, is conſonant to the old Saxon uſage. However that may be, the practice of Orm muſt certainly be admitted to prove, that ſuch a pronunciation prevailed at leaſt 150 years before Chaucer.

preſume, that our anceſtors firſt paſſed from the broader ſound of *a* to the thinner ſound of *e* feminine, and not at once from *a* to *e* mute. Beſides, if the final *e* in ſuch words was not pronounced, why was it added? From the time that it has confeſſedly ceaſed to be pronounced it has been gradually omitted in them, except where it may be ſuppoſed of uſe to lengthen or ſoften [70] the preceding ſyllable, as in—*hope*, *name*, &c. But according to the ancient orthography it terminates many words of Saxon original, where it cannot have been added for any ſuch purpoſe, as, *herte*, *childe*, *olde*, *wilde*, &c. In theſe therefore we muſt ſuppoſe that it was pronounced as an *e* feminine, and made part of a ſecond ſyllable; and ſo, by a parity of reaſon, in all others, in which, as in theſe, it appears to have been ſubſtituted for the Saxon *a*.

Upon the ſame grounds we may preſume, that in words terminated, according to the Saxon form, in *en*, ſuch as the Infinitive modes and Plural numbers of Verbs, and a great variety of Adverbs and Prepoſitions, the *n* only was at firſt thrown away, and the *e*, which then became final, continued for a long time to be pronounced as well as written.

Theſe conſiderations ſeem ſufficient to make us believe, that the pronunciation of the *e* feminine is founded on the very nature of both the French and Saxon parts of our language; and therefore, though we may not be able to trace the reaſons of that pronunciation in all caſes ſo plainly as in thoſe which have been juſt mentioned, we may ſafely, I think, conclude with the learned Wallis [71], that what is generally conſidered as an *e* mute in

[70] In moſt of the words in which the final *e* has been omitted, its uſe in lengthening or ſoftening the preceding ſyllable has been ſupplied by an alteration in the Orthography of that Syllable. Thus, in—*grete*, *mete*, *ſtele*, *rede*, *dere*,—in which the firſt *e* was originally long, as cloſing a ſyllable, it has (ſince they have been pronounced as Monoſyllables) been changed either into *ea*, as in—*great*, *meat*, *ſteal*, *read*, *dear*; or into *ee*, as in—*greet*, *meet*, *ſteel*, *reed*, *deer*. In like manner the *o* in—*bote*, *fole*, *dore*, *gode*, *mone*, has been changed either into *oa*, as in—*boat*, *foal*; or into *oo*, as in—*door*, *good*, *moon*.

[71] Gram. Ling. Ang. c. i. §. 2. "Originem vero hujus *e* muti, nequis miretur unde devenerit, hanc eſſe judico: Nempe, quod antiquitus pronunciatum fuerit, ſed obſcuro ſo-

no,

in our language, either at the end or in the middle of words[72], was antiently pronounced, but obſcurely, like the *e* feminine of the French.

§ XVII. The

no, ſicut Gallorum *e* fœmininum." He afterwards adds: "Certiſſimum autem hujus rei indicium eſt ex antiquis Poetis petendum; apud quos reperitur illud *e* promiſcuè vel conſtituere vel non conſtituere novam Syllabam, prout ratio carminis poſtulaverit." So that, according to this judicious writer, (who has confeſſedly ſearched much deeper into the formation of vocal ſounds in general, and the pronunciation of the Engliſh language in particular, than any of our other Grammarians,) I might have aſſumed, as certain, the point, which I have been labouring in the text (by arguments drawn from reaſon and analogy) to render probable.

There is much more to this purpoſe in Wallis, *loc. cit.* which I ſhould tranſcribe, if I did not ſuppoſe that his book is in the hands of every one, who is likely to be curious upon this ſubject. I will only take notice of one paſſage which may be wreſted to his diſadvantage. From conſidering the gradual extinction of the *e* feminine in our language, and obſerving that the French, with whom he converſed, very often ſuppreſſed it in their common ſpeech, he has been led to predict, that the pronunciation of it would *perhaps ſhortly* be diſuſed among them as among ourſelves. The prediction has certainly failed; but, notwithſtanding, I will venture to ſay, that, at the time when it was made, it was not unworthy of Walliſes ſagacity. Unluckily for its ſucceſs, a number of eminent writers happened, at that very time, to be growing up in France, whoſe works, having ſince been received as ſtandards of ſtyle, muſt probably fix for many centuries the antient uſage of the *e* feminine in Poetry, and of courſe give a conſiderable check to the natural progreſs of the language. If the age of Edward III had been as favourable to Letters as that of Louis XIV; if Chaucer and his contemporary Poets had acquired the ſame authority here, that Corneille, Moliere, Racine, and Boileau, have obtained in France; if their works had been publiſhed by themſelves, and perpetuated in a genuine ſtate by printing; I think it probable, that the *e* feminine would ſtill have preſerved its place in our Poetical language at leaſt, and certainly without any prejudice to the ſmoothneſs of our verſification.

[72] The reaſoning in the text concerning the final *e* is equally applicable to the ſame vowel in the middle of words. Indeed (as Wallis has obſerved, *loc. cit.*) "vix uſpiam in medio dictionis reperitur *e* mutum, quod non ab origine fuerit finale." If therefore it was pronounced while final, it would probably continue to be pronounced notwithſtanding the addition of a ſyllable. If it was pronounced in *ſwete*, *trewe*, *large*, *riche*, it would be pronounced in *ſwetely*, *trewely*, *largely*, *richely*. [See ver. 123 and 3219, ver. 775 and 3692, ver. 2740 and 3034, ver. 1014 and 1913.] In another very numerous ſet of words (French

Verbals

§ XVII. The third kind of irregularity, to which an Engliſh verſe is liable, is from the accents being miſplaced. The reſtoring of Chaucer's words to their juſt number of ſyllables, by the methods which have been pointed out above, will often be of ſignal ſervice in reſtoring his accents alſo to their proper places; but further, in many words, we muſt be cautious of concluding too haſtily that Chaucer accented the ſame ſyllables that we do. On the contrary, I am perſuaded that in his French words he moſt commonly laid his accent according to the French cuſtom (upon the *laſt* ſyllable, or the *laſt but one* in words ending in *e* feminine), which, as is well known, is the very reverſe of our practice. Thus in ver. 3. he uſes *licoúr* for *líquour*; ver. 11. *coráges* for *coúrages*; ver. 22. again, *corége* for *coúrage*; ver. 37. *reſón* for *réaſon*; ver. 77. *viáge* for *vóyage*; ver. 109, 10. *viſáge—uſáge* for *víſage—úſage*; ver. 140. *manére* for *mánner*; ver. 186. *laboúre* for *lábour*; ver. 204. *prelát* for *prélate*; ver. 211. *langáge* for *lánguage*; ver. 212. *mariáge* for *márriage*; ver. 216. *contrée* for *coúntry*; and ſo through the whole work.

In the ſame manner he accents the laſt Syllable of the Participle Preſent, as, ver. 885, 6. *wedding—coming* for *wédding—cóming*; ver. 903. *living* for *líving*; ver. 907, 8. *coming—crying* for *cóming—crýing*; ver. 998. *brenning* for *brénning*, &c. and as he does this in words of Saxon as well as of French growth, I ſhould ſuppoſe that the old Participle of the preſent tenſe, ending in *and*, was originally accented upon that ſyllable, as it certainly continued to be by the Scottiſh Poets a long time after Chaucer. See Bp. Douglas, Virg. p. 18. ver. 18. Spryngánd; ver. 51. Beránd; p. 27. ver. 49. Fleánd; p. 29. ver. 10. Seánd.

Theſe

Verbals ending in *ment)* the pronunciation of this middle *e* is countenanced, not only by analogy, but alſo by the ſtill ſubſiſting practice in the French language. So Chaucer certainly pronounced the words, *jugement*, ver. 780. 807. 820. *commandement*, ver. 2871. 2981. *amendement*, ver. 4183. *pavement*, *aviſement*, ver. 4505, 6. Even Spenſer in the ſame Canto (the 8th of B. v.) uſes *attonement* and *avengement*, as words of four ſyllables; [St. 21. 8.—30. 5.] and Wallis takes notice that the middle *e* in *commandement* was pronounced in his time.

pavimentum Lat.

Theſe inſtances are all taken from the Riming ſyllables (where a ſtrong accent is indiſpenſably neceſſary) in order to prove beyond contradiction, that Chaucer frequently accented his words in the French manner. But if he followed this practice at the end of his verſes, it is more than probable that he did the ſame in the middle, whenever it gave a more harmonious flow to his metre; and therefore in ver. 4. inſtead of *vértue*, I ſuppoſe he pronounced, *vertúe*; in ver. 11. inſtead of *náture*, *natúre*; in ver. 25. inſtead of *avénture*, *aventúre*; in ver. 46. inſtead of *hónour*, *honoúr*, &c.

It may be proper however to obſerve, that we are not to expect from Chaucer that regularity in the diſpoſition of his accents, which the practice of our greateſt Poets in the laſt and the preſent century has taught us to conſider as eſſential to harmonious[73] verſification. None of his maſters, either French or Italian, had ſet him a pattern of exactneſs[74] in this reſpect; and it is rather ſurpriſing, that, without rule or example to guide him,

[73] It is agreed, I believe, that, in our Heroic Metre, thoſe Verſes, conſidered ſingly, are the moſt harmonious, in which the Accents fall upon the even Syllables; but it has never, that I know, been defined, how far a verſe may vary from this its moſt perfect form, and yet remain a verſe. On the *tenth* (or riming) ſyllable a ſtrong Accent is in all caſes indiſpenſably required; and in order to make the line tolerably harmonious, it ſeems neceſſary that at leaſt *two more* of the *even* ſyllables ſhould be accented, the *fourth* being (almoſt always) one of them. Milton however has not ſubjected his verſe even to theſe rules; and particularly, either by negligence or deſign, he has frequently put an unaccented ſyllable in the *fourth* place. See P. L. b. iii. 36. 586. b. v. 413. 750. 874.

[74] It has been ſuggeſted above, that Chaucer probably copied his Heroic Metre from Boccace. But neither Boccace nor any of the older Italian Poets are exact in the diſpoſition of their accents. Though their Hendecaſyllable Metre is allowed by the beſt Critics to be derived from the Trimeter Iambic Catalectic, the perfection of it has never been determined, like that of our Heroic Metre, to conſiſt in the conformity of its Accents to the pure Iambic meaſure. Quadrio, L. ii. Diſt. iii. c. iv. Part. i. Nor does the King of Navarre always diſpoſe his Accents more agreeably to our preſent notions. It is probable, I think, that ſome fundamental differences in the three languages may have led each of the three nations to prefer a different form of conſtructing the ſame kind of verſe.

him, he has ſo ſeldom failed to place his accents in ſuch a manner, as to produce the cadence beſt ſuited to the nature of his verſe.

§ XVIII. I ſhall conclude this long and (I fear) tedious Eſſay, with a Grammatical and Metrical Analyſis of the firſt eighteen lines of the Canterbury Tales. This will afford me an opportunity of illuſtrating at once a conſiderable part of that Theory, which I have ventured to propoſe in the preceding pages, with regard to the Language and Verſification of Chaucer. The remainder I ſhall take occaſion to explain in a few notes upon particular paſſages.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

I. [1]*Whánne* that Ápril wíth his [2]*ſhoúres* [3]*ſóte*
II. The droúghte of Márch hath [1]*pérced* tó the [2]*róte*,
III. And [1]*báthed* évery véine in [2]*ſwíche* [3]*licoúr*,
IV. Of whíche [1]*vertúe* engéndred ís the floúr;

v. Whan

I. 1. *Whanne*, SAX. Hpænne, is ſo ſeldom uſed as a *Diſſyllable* by Chaucer, that for ſome time I had great doubts about the true reading of this line. I now believe that it is right, as here printed, and that the ſame word is to be pronounced as a *Diſſyllable* in ver. 703.

But with theſe relikes *whanne* that he fond—

Thanne, a word of the ſame form, occurs more frequently as a *Diſſyllable*. See ver. 12260. 12506. 12721. 13924. 15282.

2. *Shoures*, Diſ. *Plural number*. See above, p. 56.—3. *Sote*. See ver. v.

II. 1. *Perced*, Diſ. *Participle of the Paſt Time*. See above, p. 57.—2. *Rote*; root.

III. 1. *Bathed*, Diſ. See II. 1.—2. *Swiche*, ſuch; from *Swilke*, SAX.—3. *licoúr*, FR. has the accent upon the *laſt* ſyllable, after the French mode.

IV. 1. *Vertúe*, FR. may be accented in the ſame manner. There is another way of preſerving the harmony of this verſe, by making *whiche* (from *whilke*, SAX.) a *Diſſyllable*. See ver. 1014. 3921. 5488. 6537. *Vertue* may then be pronounced, as it is now, with the accent on the *firſt*; the ſecond ſyllable being incorporated with the firſt of *engendred*.

v. Whan Zêphirús eke wíth his [1]*ſóte* bréthe
vi. [1]*Enſpíred* háth in évery hólt and héthe
vii. The téndre [1] *cróppes*, and the [2] *yónge* ſónne,
viii. Háth in the Rám his [1] *hálfe* coúrs [2] *yrónne*,
ix. And [1] *ſmále* [2] *foúles* [3] *máken* mélodíe,
x. That [1] *ſlépen* [2] *álle* níght with ópen eye,
xi. So príketh [1] *hém* [2] *natúre* in [3] *hir* [4] *coráges*;

xii. Than

V. 1. *Sote, ſwote, ſwete*; ſweet, Dif. See ver. 3219. 3699. 3724. 3765. 3790.

VI. 1. *Enſpired*, Trif. *Part. of Paſt Time.*

VII. 1. *Croppes*, Dif. *Pl. N.* as *ſhoures*. I. 2.—2. *Yonge*, Dif. See ver. 213. 666. 1013. 3233, 73. It is uſed as a *Diſſyllable* in the *Ormulum*. Col. 230.

That wás god bíſne fúl i wís till úre *yúnge* génge.

Stronge and *Longe* are pronounced in the ſame manner. See ver. 2375. 2640, 6. 3069. 3438. 3682.

VIII. 1. *Halfe*, or *Halve*, Dif. The original word is *Halfen*. So *Selve*, from *Selfen*, is a *Diſſyllable*, ver. 2862. 4535.

2. *Yronne*; Run. *Part. of the Paſt Time*, with the Saxon prepoſitive particle ȝe, which in the Mss. of Chaucer is univerſally expreſſed by *y*, or *i*. In this Edition, for the ſake of perſpicuity, *y* only is uſed.

IX. 1. *Smale*, Dif. See ver. 146. 2078. 6897. 10207.—2. *Foules*, Dif. as *Shoures*. I. 2.—3. *Maken*; make. *Plural Number of the Preſent Tenſe*. See above, p. 24.

X. 1. *Slepen*, as *Maken*. IX. 3.—2. *Alle*, Dif. See ver. 76. 348. 536. 1854. 2102.

XI. 1. *Hem*; Them. It is conſtantly uſed ſo by Chaucer. 2. *Nature* ſhould perhaps be accented on the *laſt* ſyllable (or rather the *laſt but one*, ſuppoſing it a *Triſyllable*), after the French manner, though in the preſent caſe the verſe will be ſufficiently harmonious if it be accented on the *firſt*. That Chaucer did often accent it after the French manner appears from ver. 8778. 9842. 11657. 11945. 12229. In the ſame manner he accents *Figúre*, ver. 2037. 2045. *Meſúre*, ver. 8132. 8498. *Aſúre*, *Statúre*, ver. 8130, 3. *Peintúre*, ver. 11967. *Aventúre*, ver. 1188. 1237. *Creatúre*, ver. 2397. 4884. and many other words of the ſame form, derived from the French language.—3. *Hir*; Their. The Poſſeſſive Pronoun of the third Perſon Plural is variouſly written, *Hir*, *Hire*, *Her*, and *Here*; not only in different Mss. but even in the ſame page of good Mss. There ſeems to be no reaſon for perpetuating varieties of this kind, which can only have taken their riſe from the unſettled ſtate of our Orthography before the invention of Printing, and which now contribute more

than

XII. Than [1] *lóngen* fólk to [2] *gón* on pílgrimáges,
XIII. And [1] *pálmer'es* fór to [2] *ſéken* [3] *ſtránge* ſtróndes,
XIV. To [1] *ſérve* [2] *hálwes* [3] *coúthe* in ſóndry lóndes;
XV. And ſpécially from évery [1] *ſhíres* énde
XVI. Of [1] *Englelónd* to Cánterbúry [2] *they wénde,*
XVII. The hóly blísful mártyr fór to ſéke,
XVIII. That [1] *hém* hath [2] *hólpen,* whán that théy were [3] *ſéke.*

than any real alteration of the language to obſcure the ſenſe of our old Authors. In this edition therefore, *Hir* is conſtantly put to ſignify *Their*; and *Hire* to ſignify *Her*, whether it be the Oblique caſe of the Perſonal Pronoun *She*, or the Poſſeſſive of the ſame Pronoun.—4. *Coráges*, Fr. is to be accented on the *Penultima*. See before, p. 61. and alſo ver. 1947. 2215. To the other inſtances quoted in p. 61. add, *Avantáge*, ver. 2449. 4566. *Brocáge*, 3375. *Foráge*, ver. 3166. *Lináge*, ver. 4270. 5419. *Serváge*, ver. 1948. 4788. *Coſtáge*, ver. 5831. *Paráge*, ver. 5832.

XII. 1. *Longen*, as *Maken*. IX. 3.—2. *Gon*, Infinitive Mode of *Go*, terminated in *n* according to the Saxon form. See above, p. 25.

XIII. 1. *Pálmer'es*, Diſ. the *e* of the termination being cut out by Syncope, as it generally is in *Plural Nouns* of *three* Syllables, accented upon the *firſt*, and in the *Paſt Tenſes* and their *Participles* of *Verbs*, of the ſame deſcription, ending in *ed*. The reaſon ſeems to be, that, where the Accent is placed ſo early, we cannot pronounce the final ſyllables fully, without laying more ſtreſs upon them, than they can properly bear.—2. *Seken*, as *Gon*. XII. 2.—3. *Strange*, Diſ. Fr. See before, p. 57.

XIV. 1. *Serve*, Diſ. from *Serven*, the *n* being thrown away before *h*. See above, p. 25 and 59.—2. *Halwes*, Sax. ꝑalȝer. The Saxon ȝ is changed into *w*, as in *ſorwe*, *morwe*, and ſome others; though it generally paſſes into *y*. The derivatives from this ſame word afford us inſtances of both forms; *Holyneſs*, *Holyday*, All-*Hallows*-day.—3. *Couthe*; known, *The Participle of the Paſt Time* from *Connen*, to know. See before, n. 35.

XV. 1. *Shires*, Diſ. *Genitive Caſe Sing*. See before, p. 56.

XVI. 1. *Englelond*, Triſyllable, from the Saxon Enȝlalanda.—2. The laſt foot conſiſts of three ſyllables.

— to Cán | terbúr | y they wénde.

See above, n. 66.

XVIII. 1. *Hem*; Them. See XI. 1.—2. *Holpen*, the *Participle of the Paſt Time* from the Irregular Verb *Help*. See before, n. 34.—3. *Seke*; Sick. As Chaucer uſually writes this word *Sike*, we may ſuppoſe that in this inſtance he has altered the Orthography in order to make the Rime more exact; a liberty, with which he ſometimes indulges himſelf,

though much more ſparingly than his contemporary Poets. The Saxon writers afford authorities to juſtify either method of ſpelling, as they uſe both ðeoca and ðioca.

I have hitherto conſidered theſe verſes as conſiſting of *ten* ſyllables only; but it is impoſſible not to obſerve, that, according to the rules of pronunciation eſtabliſhed above, all of them, except the 3d and 4th, conſiſt really of *eleven* ſyllables. This is evident at firſt ſight in ver. 11, 12, 13, 14, and might be ſhewn as clearly, by authority or analogy, in the others; but as the *eleventh* ſyllable, in our verſification, being unaccented, may always, I apprehend, be abſent or preſent without prejudice to the metre, there does not ſeem to be any neceſſity for pointing it out in every particular inſtance.

AN

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

TO THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

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AN

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

TO THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

§ 1. THE Dramatic form, which Boccace gave to his collection of Tales, or Novels, about the middle of the fourteenth Century [1], muſt be allowed to have been a capital improvement of that ſpecies of amuſing compoſition. The Decameron in that reſpect, not to mention many others, has the ſame advantage over the *Cento Novelle antiche*, which are ſuppoſed to have

[1] The Action of the Decameron being ſuppoſed in 1348, the year of the great peſtilence, it is probable that Boccace did not ſet about his work till after that period. How ſoon he completed it is uncertain. It ſhould ſeem from the introduction to the Fourth Day, that a part (containing perhaps the three firſt Days) was publiſhed ſeparately; for in that Introduction he takes pains to anſwer the cenſures, which had been paſſed upon him by ſeveral perſons, who had read his Novels. One of the cenſures is, "that it did not become *his age* to write for the amuſement of women, &c." In his anſwer he ſeems to allow the fact, that he was rather an old fellow, but endeavours to juſtify himſelf by the examples of "Guido Cavalcanti et Dante Alighieri *gia vecchi* et Meſſer Cino da Piſtoia *vecchiſſimo*." It appears from a paſſage in the *Laberinto d'Amore* [Ed. 1723. t. iii. p. 24.], that Boccace conſidered himſelf as an elderly man, when he was a little turned of forty; and therefore the publication of the firſt part of the Decameron may very well have been, as

have preceded it in point of time, that a regular Comedy will neceſſarily have over an equal number of ſingle unconnected Scenes. Perhaps indeed there would be no great harm, if the Critics would permit us to conſider the Decameron, and other compoſitions of that kind, in the light of Comedies not intended for the ſtage: at leaſt we may venture to aſſume, that the cloſer any ſuch compoſition ſhall copy the moſt eſſential forms of Comedy, the more natural and defined the Plan ſhall be; the more the Characters ſhall be diverſified; the more the Tales ſhall be ſuited to the Characters; ſo much the more conſpicuous will be the ſkill of the Writer, and his work approach the nearer to perfection.

§ 11. The Canterbury Tales are a work of the ſame nature with the Decameron, and were, in all probability, compoſed in imitation of it, though upon a different and, in my opinion, an improved plan. It would be eaſy to ſhew, that, in the ſeveral points abovementioned, Chaucer has either been more judicious, or more fortunate, than his maſter Boccace: but, waving for the preſent [2] that diſquiſition, I ſhall proceed to the immediate

Salviati has fixed it, [V. Manni, Iſt. del Decam. p. 144.] in 1353, when Boccace was juſt forty years of age. If we conſider the nature of the work, and that the Author, in his Concluſion, calls it repeatedly "*lunga fatica*," and ſays, that "*molto tempo*" had paſſed between the commencement and the completion of it, we can hardly, I think, ſuppoſe that it was finiſhed in leſs than ten years; which will bring the publication of the entire collection of Novels, as we now have it, down to 1358.

[2] I will only juſt mention what appear to me to be fundamental defects in the Decameron. In the firſt place, the *Action* is indefinite; not limited by its own nature, but merely by the will of the Author. It might, if he had been ſo pleaſed, have as well comprehended twenty, or a hundred days, as ten; and therefore, though ſome frivolous reaſons are aſſigned for the return of the Company to Florence, we ſee too plainly, that the true reaſon was, that the budget of Novels was exhauſted. Not to mention, that every day after the firſt may properly be conſidered as containing a new Action, or, what is worſe, a repetition of the Action of the former day. The ſecond defect is in the *Characters*, which are ſo nearly reſembling to each other, in age, rank, and even natural diſpoſition, that, if they had been ſtrictly ſupported, their converſation muſt have been incapable of

that

diate object of this Diſcourſe, which is, in the firſt place, to lay before the Reader the general plan of the Canterbury Tales, as it appears to have been originally deſigned by Chaucer; and, ſecondly, to give a particular review of the ſeveral parts of that work, which are come down to us, as they are publiſhed in this edition.

§ III. THE GENERAL PLAN of the Canterbury Tales may be learned in a great meaſure from the Prologue, which Chaucer himſelf has prefixed to them. He ſuppoſes there, that a company of Pilgrims going to Canterbury aſſemble at an Inn in Southwark, and agree, that, for their common amuſement on the road, each of them ſhall tell at leaſt one Tale in going to Canterbury, and another in coming back from thence; and that he, who ſhall tell the beſt Tales, ſhall be treated by the reſt with a ſupper upon their return to the ſame Inn. This is ſhortly the *Fable*. The *Characters* of the Pilgrims are as various as, at that time, coud be found in the ſeveral departments of *middle* life; that is, in fact, as various as coud, with any probability, be brought together, ſo as to form one company; the higheſt and the loweſt ranks of ſociety being neceſſarily excluded. It appears further, that the deſign of Chaucer was not barely to recite the Tales told by the Pilgrims, but alſo to deſcribe their journey, *And all the remenant of* their *pilgrimage* [ver. 726.]; including, probably, their adventures at Canterbury as well as upon the road. If we add, that the Tales, beſides being nicely adapted to the Characters of their reſpective Relaters, were intended to be connected together by ſuitable introductions, and interſperſed with diverting epiſodes; and that the greateſt part of them was to have been executed in Verſe; we ſhall have a tolerable idea of the extent and difficulty of the whole undertaking: and admiring, as we muſt, the

that variety, which is neceſſary to carry the reader through ſo long a work. The third defect has ariſen from the author's attempt to remedy the ſecond. In order to diverſify and enliven his narrations, he has made a circle of virtuous ladies and polite gentlemen hear and relate in their turns a number of ſtories, which cannot with any degree of probability be ſuppoſed to have been ſuffered in ſuch an aſſembly.

the vigour of that genius, which in an advanced age [3] coud begin ſo vaſt a work, we ſhall rather lament than be ſurpriſed that it has been left imperfect.

§ IV. In truth, if we compare thoſe parts of the Canterbury Tales, of which we are in poſſeſſion, with the ſketch which has been juſt given of the intended whole, it will be found that more than one half is wanting. The Prologue we have, perhaps nearly complete, and the greateſt part of the journey to Canterbury; but not a word of the tranſactions at Canterbury, or of the journey homeward, or of the Epilogue, which, we may ſuppoſe, was to have concluded the work, with an account of the Prize-ſupper and the ſeparation of the company. Even in that part which we have of the journey to Canterbury, it will be neceſſary, in the following Review, to take notice of certain defects and inconſiſtencies, which can only be accounted for upon the ſuppoſition, that the work was never finiſhed by the Author.

§ V. Having thus ſtated the general Plan of the Canterbury Tales, I ſhall now, according to my promiſe, enter upon a particular Review of thoſe

[3] Chaucer was born in 1328, and it is moſt probable, I think, that he did not begin his Canterbury Tales before 1382, at the earlieſt. My reaſon is this. The Queen, who is mentioned in the *Legende of Good Women*, ver. 496. was certainly Anne of Bohemia, the firſt Queen of Richard II. She was not married to Richard, till the beginning of 1382, ſo that the Legende cannot poſſibly be ſuppoſed of an earlier date than that year. In the Legende [ver. 329—332. ver. 417—430.] Chaucer has enumerated, I believe, all the conſiderable works which he had then compoſed. It was to his purpoſe not to omit any. He not only does not mention the Canterbury Tales, but he expreſsly names *the ſtory of Palamon and Arcite* and *the Life of Saint Cecilia*, both which now make part of them, as ſeparate compoſitions. I am perſuaded therefore, that in 1382 the work of the Canterbury Tales was not begun; and if we look further and conſider the troubles in which Chaucer was involved, for the five or ſix following years, by his connexions with John of Northampton, we can hardly ſuppoſe that it was much advanced before 1389, the ſixty-firſt year of the author's age.

thoſe parts of them, which are publiſhed in this edition, beginning with THE PROLOGUE.

It ſeems to have been the intention of Chaucer, in the firſt lines of the Prologue, to mark with ſome exactneſs the *time* of his ſuppoſed pilgrimage; but unluckily the two circumſtances of his deſcription, which were moſt likely to anſwer that purpoſe, are each of them irreconcileable to the other. When he tells us, that "the ſhoures of April had *perced to the rote* the drought of March" [ver. 1, 2.], we muſt ſuppoſe, in order to allow due time for ſuch an operation, that April was far advanced; while on the other hand the place of the Sun, "having juſt run half his courſe in the Ram" [ver. 7, 8.], reſtrains us to ſome day in the very latter end of March; as the Vernal Equinox, in the age of Chaucer, according to his own treatiſe on the Aſtrolabe[4], was computed to happen on the twelfth of March. This difficulty may, and I think, ſhould, be removed by reading in ver. 8, *the Bull*, inſtead of *the Ram*[5]. All the parts of the deſcription will then be conſiſtent with themſelves, and with another paſſage [ver. 4425.], where, in the beſt Mss. *the eighte and twenty day* of April is named as the day of the journey to Canterbury.

We will ſuppoſe therefore, that the preceding day, the ſeven and twentieth

[4] In this particular the Editions agree with the Mss. but in general, the printed text of this Treatiſe is ſo monſtrouſly incorrect, that it cannot be cited with any ſafety.

[5] This correction may ſeem to be authoriſed, in ſome meaſure, by Lidgate, who begins his continuation of the Canterbury Tales in this manner.

"Whan bright Phebus *paſſed was the Ram*
Midde of Aprill, and into the Bull came."

But the truth is, that Dan John wrote for the moſt part in a great hurry, and conſequently without much accuracy. In the account which he proceeds to give of Chaucer's Tales, he not only confounds the circumſtances of deſcription of the Sompnour and Pardoner, but he ſpeaks of the latter as—

Telling a tale to anger with the Frere.
Storie of Thebes, ver. 32—5.

tieth of April, was the day on which the company aſſembled at the Tabard. In what year this happened, Chaucer has not thought fit to inform us[6]. Either he did not think it neceſſary to fix that point at all; or perhaps

[6] It is clear, that, whether the Pilgrimage were real or imaginary, Chaucer, as a Poet, had a right to ſuppoſe it to have happened at the time which he thought beſt. He was only to take care, when the time was once fixed, that no circumſtances were admitted into his Poem, which might claſh, or be inconſiſtent with the date of it. When no particular date is aſſigned to a fable of this ſort, we muſt naturally imagine that the date of the fable coincides with that of the compoſition; and accordingly, if we examine the Canterbury Tales, we ſhall not find any circumſtances which do not perfectly ſuit with that period, which has been ſtated in a former note as the probable time of Chaucer's beginning to compoſe them. The lateſt hiſtorical fact mentioned in them is the Inſurrection of Jakke Straw [ver. 15400.], which happened in 1381; and the earlieſt, in which any perſon of the Drama is concerned, is the ſiege of Algezir [ver. 56, 7], which began in Auguſt 1342, and ended, with the taken of the city, in March 1344. Mariana, l. xvi. c. x, xi. The Knight therefore may very well be ſuppoſed to have been at that ſiege, and alſo upon a Pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1383, or thereabouts.

They who are diſpoſed to believe the Pilgrimage to have been real, and to have happened in 1383, may ſupport their opinion by the following inſcription, which is ſtill to be read upon the Inn, now called the Talbot, in Southwark. "This in the Inn where Sir Jeffrey Chaucer and the twenty-nine Pilgrims lodged in their journey to Canterbury, Anno 1383." Though the preſent inſcription is evidently of a very recent date, we might ſuppoſe it to have been propagated to us by a ſucceſſion of faithful tranſcripts from the very time; but unluckily there is too good reaſon to be aſſured, that the firſt inſcription of this ſort was not earlier than the laſt century. Mr. Speght, who appears to have been inquiſitive concerning this Inn in 1597, has left us this account of it in his Gloſſary, v. TABARD. "A jaquet, or ſleveleſſe coate, worne in times paſt by Noblemen in the warres, but now onely by Heraults, and is called theyre coate of Armes in ſerviſe. It is the ſigne of an Inne in Southwarke by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Wincheſter. This was the Hoſtelry where *Chaucer* and the other Pilgrims mett together, and, with *Henry Baily* their hoſte, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury. And whereas through time it hath bin much decaied, it is now by Maſter *J. Preſton*, with the Abbot's houſe thereto adjoyned, newly repaired, and with convenient roomes much encreaſed, for the receipt of many gueſts."

If any inſcription of this kind had then been there, he would hardly have omitted to mention it; and therefore I am perſuaded it has been put up ſince his time, and moſt probably

haps he poſtponed it, till the completion of his work ſhould enable him to aſſign ſuch a date to his Fable, as ſhould be conſiſtent with all the hiſtorical circumſtances, which he might take occaſion to introduce into it.

§ VI. A ſecond point, intended to be defined in the Prologue, is the *number of the company*; and this too has its difficulties. They are ſaid in ver. 24. to have been *nine and twenty*, but it is not clear whether Chaucer himſelf is included in that number. They might therefore, according to that paſſage, be *thirty*; but if we reckon the ſeveral characters, as they are enumerated in the Prologue, we ſhall find them *one and thirty*; 1. a Knight; 2. a Squier; 3. a Yeman; 4. a Prioreſſe; 5. an other Nonne; 6. 7. 8. Three Preeſtes; 9. a Monk; 10. a Frere; 11. a Marchant; 12. a Clerk of Oxenforde; 13. a Sergeant of the Lawe; 14. a Frankelein; 15. an Haberdaſher; 16. a Carpenter; 17. a Webbe; 18. a Deyer; 19. a Tapiſer; 20. a Coke; 21. a Shipman; 22. a Doctour of Phyſike; 23. a Wif of Bathe; 24. a Perſone; 25. a Plowman; 26. a Reve; 27. a Miller; 28. a Sompnour; 29. a Pardoner; 30. a Manciple; 31. Chaucer himſelf. It muſt be obſerved however that in this liſt there is one very ſuſpicious article, which is that of the *three Preeſtes*. As it appears evidently to have been the deſign of Chaucer to compoſe his company of individuals of different ranks, in order to produce a greater variety of diſtinct characters,

bably when the ſign was changed from the Tabard to the Talbot, in order to preſerve the antient glory of the Houſe notwithſtanding its new title. Whoever furniſhed the date, muſt be allowed to have at leaſt invented plauſibly.

While I am upon the ſubject of this famous Hoſtelry, I will juſt add, that it was probably parcel of two tenements which appear to have been conveyed by William de Ludegarſale to the Abbot, &c. *de Hydâ juxta Winton*, in 1306, and which are deſcribed, in a former conveyance there recited, to extend in length, "a communi foſſato de Suthwerke verſus Orientem, uſque Regiam viam de Suthwerke verſus Occidentem." Regiſtrum de Hyde, Ms. Harl. 1761. fol. 166—173. If we ſhould ever be ſo happy as to recover the account-books of the Abbey of Hyde, we may poſſibly learn what rent *Harry Bailly* paid for his inn, and many other important particulars.

characters, we can hardly conceive that he would, in this ſingle inſtance, introduce *three*, of the ſame profeſſion, without any diſcriminating circumſtances whatever; and in fact, when the Nonnes Preeſt is called upon to tell his tale, [ver. 14814.] he is accoſted by the Hoſt in a manner, which will not permit us to ſuppoſe that two others of the ſame denomination were preſent. This muſt be allowed to be a ſtrong objection to the genuineneſs of that article of the *three* Preeſtes; but it is not the only one. All the other Characters are particularly deſcribed, and moſt of them very much at large, whereas the whole that is ſaid of the *other Nonne* and the *three Preeſtes* is contained in theſe two lines [ver. 163, 4.] at the end of the Prioreſſes character:

> Another Nonne alſo with hire had ſhe,
> That was hire Chapellein, and Preeſtes thre.

Where it is alſo obſervable, that the ſingle circumſtance of deſcription is falſe; for no Nonne coud be a Chaplain. The chief duty of a Chaplain was to ſay Maſs, and to hear Confeſſion, neither of which offices coud regularly be performed by a Nonne, or by any woman [7].

It ſhould ſeem therefore, that we have ſufficient ground to reject theſe two lines, or at leaſt the ſecond, as an interpolation [8]; by which means we ſhall

[7] It appears that ſome Abbeſſes did at one time attempt to hear the Confeſſions of their Nuns, and to exerciſe ſome other ſmaller parts of the clerical function: but this practice, I apprehend, was ſoon ſtopped by Gregory IX, who has forbidden it in the ſtrongeſt terms. Decretal. l. v. tit. 38. c. x. Nova quædam noſtris ſunt auribus intimata, quod Abbatiſſæ moniales proprias benedicunt; *ipſarum quoque confeſſiones in criminibus audiunt*, et legentes Evangelium præſumunt publice prædicare: Cum igitur id abſonum ſit et pariter abſurdum, Mandamus quatenus ne id de cætero fiat cunctis firmiter inhibere. If theſe preſumptuous Abbeſſes had ventured to ſay Maſs, his Holyneſs would doubtleſs have thundered ſtill louder againſt them.

[8] My notion, I cannot call it opinion, of the matter is this; that the firſt of theſe lines did really begin the character of the Nonne, which Chaucer had originally inſerted in this place together with that of the Nonnes Preeſt, at as great length as the other characters, but

ſhall get rid of *two* of the Preeſtes, and the detail of the characters will agree with the groſs number in ver. 24, Chaucer himſelf being included among the *nine and twenty*. As Novelliſts generally delight in even numbers, it is not improbable that the Hoſt was intended to be the thirtieth. Though not under the ſame obligation with the other Pilgrims, he might nevertheleſs tell his Tale among them as a Volunteer.

§ VII. This leads me, in the third place, to examine what the *agreement* was, which the Pilgrims entered into, at the ſuggeſtion of the Hoſt, with reſpect to the number of Tales that each perſon was to tell. The propoſal of the Hoſt ſtands thus, with very little variation, in all the Mss.

This is the point—ſays he, ver. 792—5.

> That eche of you, to ſhorten with youre way,
> In this viage ſhal tellen tales tway,
> To Canterbury ward, I mene it ſo,
> And homeward he ſhal tellen other two—

From this paſſage we ſhould certainly conclude, that each of them was to tell *two tales* in the journey to Canterbury, and *two more* in the journey homeward: but all the other paſſages, in which mention is made of this agreement, would rather lead us to believe, that they were to tell only *one* Tale in each journey; and the Prologue to the Parſons Tale ſtrongly confirms this latter ſuppoſition. The Hoſt ſays there, [ver. 17327.]

—"Now

but that they were both afterwards expunged, either by himſelf, or, more probably, by thoſe who publiſhed his work after his death, for reaſons of nearly the ſame kind with thoſe which occaſioned the ſuppreſſion of the latter part of the Cokes Tale. I ſuſpect our Bard had been rather too gay in his deſcription of theſe two Religious perſons. See a little concerning the Preeſt, ver. 15453—65.

If it ſhould be thought improbable that an interpolator would inſert any thing ſo abſurd and contradictory to the Author's plan as the ſecond line, I beg leave to ſuggeſt, that it is ſtill more improbable that ſuch a line ſhould have come from the Author himſelf; and further, I think I can promiſe, in the courſe of the following work, to point out ſeveral other undoubted interpolations, which are to the full as abſurd as the ſubject of our preſent diſcuſſion.

—"Now lacketh us no tales mo than on"—

and calling upon the Parſon to tell this one tale, which was wanting, he ſays to him, [ver. 17335.]

—"ne breke thou not our play,
For every man, ſave thou, hath told his tale."

The Parſon therefore had not told any tale before, and only one tale was expected from him (and conſequently from each of the others) upon that journey.

It is true, that a very ſlight alteration of the paſſage firſt cited would reconcile that too to this hypotheſis. If it were written—

That eche of you, to ſhorten with youre way,
In this viage ſhal tellen tales tway;
To Canterbury ward, I mene it, *o*,
And homeward he ſhal tell another *to*—

the original propoſition of the Hoſt would perfectly agree with what appears to have been the ſubſequent practice. However, I cannot venture to propoſe ſuch an alteration of the text, in oppoſition to ſo many Mss. ſome of them of the beſt note; and therefore the Reader, if he is ſo pleaſed, may conſider this as one of thoſe inconſiſtencies, hinted at above, which prove too plainly that the author had not finiſhed his work.

§. VIII. The remainder of the Prologue is employed in deſcribing the *Characters* of the Pilgrims, and their firſt ſetting out upon their journey. The little that it may be neceſſary to ſay in illuſtration of ſome of the Characters I ſhall reſerve for the Notes. The circumſtances of their ſetting out are related ſuccinctly and naturally; and the contrivance of appointing the Knight *by lot* to tell the firſt tale is a happy one, as it affords the Author the opportunity of giving his work a ſplendid opening, and at the ſame time does not infringe that apparent equality, upon which the freedom of diſcourſe and conſequently the eaſe and good humour of every ſociety ſo entirely depends. The general ſatisfaction, which this appointment

ment is ſaid to give to the company, puts us in mind of a ſimilar gratification to the ſecret wiſhes of the Grecian army, when the lot of fighting with Hector falls to Ajax; though there is not the leaſt probability that Chaucer had ever read the Iliad, even in a tranſlation.

§ IX. THE KNIGHTES TALE, or at leaſt a Poem upon the ſame ſubject, was originally compoſed by Chaucer, as a ſeparate work. As ſuch it is mentioned by him, among ſome of his other works, in the *Legende of gode women*, [ver. 420, 1.] under the title of—" al the love of Palamon and Arcite of Thebes, though the ſtorie is knowen lite—;" and the laſt words ſeem to imply that it had not made itſelf very popular. It is not impoſſible that at firſt it was a mere tranſlation of the Theſeida of Boccace, and that its preſent form was given it, when Chaucer determined to aſſign it the firſt place among his Canterbury tales. As the Theſeida, upon which this tale is entirely founded, is very rarely to be met with [9], it may be

[9] The letter, which Boccace ſent to the Fiammetta with this poem, is dated *di Napoli a* 15. *d'Aprile* 1341. Lettere di xiii. Uomini Illuſt. Ven. 1564. I believe that date is a true one, and it is remarkable, as being the very year and month, in which Petrarch received the Laurel at Rome. See Petr. Ep. Famil. XII. 12.

The firſt Edition of the Theſeida, according to Quadrio [t. vi. p. 462.], was without date, and under the miſtaken title of *Amazonide*, which might have been proper enough for the firſt book. It was ſoon after however reprinted, with its true title, at Ferrara, in 1475, fol. Dr. Aſkew was ſo obliging as to lend me the only copy of this edition, which I have ever heard of, in England. The Reverend Mr. Crofts has a later edition in 4to. printed at Venice, in 1528, but in that the poem has been *riveduto e emendato*, that is, in plain Engliſh, modernized. I cannot help ſuſpecting that Salvini, who has inveighed with great bitterneſs againſt the corruptions of the printed Theſeida, [Manni, Iſt. del Decam. p. 52.] had only examined this laſt edition; for I obſerve that a Stanza which he has quoted (from ſome Ms. as I ſuppoſe) is not near ſo correct as it is in the edition of 1475. As this Stanza contains Boccace's own account of the intention of his Poem, I ſhall tranſcribe it here from that edition. It is the beginning of his concluſion.

Poi che le Muſe nude cominciaro
Nel conſpetó de gli omeni ad andare,
Gia fur de quelli che [gia] le exercitaro

be not unpleaſing to the Reader to ſee here a ſhort ſummary of it, which will ſhew with what ſkill Chaucer has proceeded in reducing a poem of about ten thouſand lines to a little more than two thouſand, without omitting any material circumſtance.

The Theſeida is diſtributed into twelve Books or Cantoes.

B. I. contains the war of Theſeus with the Amazons; their ſubmiſſion to him; and his marriage with Hippolyta.

B. II. Theſeus, having ſpent two years in Scythia, is reproached by Perithous in a viſion, and immediately returns to Athens with Hippolyta and her ſiſter Emilia. He enters the city in triumph; finds the Grecian Ladies in the temple of Clemenzia; marches to Thebes; kills Creon, &c. and brings home Palemone and Arcita, who are

Damnati—ad eterna preſone.

B. III. Emilia, walking in a garden and ſinging, is heard and ſeen firſt by Arcita [10], who calls Palemone. They are both equally enamoured of her,

Con bello ſtilo in *boneſto* parlare,
E altri in *amoroſo* lo operaro;
Ma tu, o libro, primo al lor cantare
Di *Marte* fai gli affanni ſoſtenuti,
Nel vulgar latino mai piu non veduti.

This plainly alludes to a paſſage in Dante, de Vulgari Eloquentia, l. ii. c. ii. where, after having pointed out the three great ſubjects of Poetry, viz. *Arma, Amorem, et Rectitudinem*, (War, Love, and Morality,) and enumerated the illuſtrious writers upon each, he adds: *Arma vero nullum Italum adhuc invenio poetaſſe.* Boccace therefore apparently prides himſelf upon having ſupplied the defect remarked by Dante, and upon being the firſt who taught the Italian Muſes to ſing of *Arms*.

Beſides other variations for the worſe, the fifth line in Salvini's copy is written thus;

Ed altri in *dolci modi* l'operaro—

by which means the alluſion to Dante is rendered incomplete.

[10] In deſcribing the commencement of this Amour, which is to be the ſubject of the remainder of the poem, Chaucer has entirely departed from his author in three principal circumſtances,

her, but without any jealouſy or rivalſhip. Emilia is ſuppoſed to ſee them at the window, and to be not diſpleaſed with their admiration.—Arcita is releaſed at the requeſt of Perithous; takes his leave of Palemone, with embraces, &c.

B. IV. Arcita, having changed his name to *Pentheo*, goes into the ſervice of Menelaus at Mycenæ, and afterwards of Peleus at Ægina. From thence he returns to Athens and becomes a favourite ſervant of Theſeus, being known to Emilia, though to nobody elſe; till after ſome time he is overheard making his complaint in a wood, to which he uſually reſorted for that purpoſe, by Pamphilo, a ſervant of Palemone.

B. V. Upon the report of Pamphilo, Palemone *begins* to be jealous of Arcita, and is deſirous to get out of priſon in order to fight with him. This he accompliſhes with the aſſiſtance of Pamphilo, by changing clothes with Alimeto, a Phyſician. He goes armed to the wood in queſt of Arcita, whom he finds ſleeping. At firſt they are very civil and friendly to each other [11]. Then Palemone calls upon Arcita to renounce his pretenſions to Emilia, or to fight with him. After many long expoſtulations on the part of Arcita, they fight, and are diſcovered firſt by Emilia, who ſends for Theſeus. When he finds who they are, and the cauſe of their difference, he

circumſtances, and, I think, in each with very good reaſon. 1. By ſuppoſing Emilia to be ſeen firſt by Palamon, he gives him an advantage over his rival which makes the cataſtrophe more conſonant to poetical juſtice. 2. The picture which Boccace has exhibited of two young princes, violently enamoured of the ſame object, without jealouſy or rivalſhip, if not abſolutely unnatural, is certainly very inſipid and unpoetical. 3. As no conſequence is to follow from their being ſeen by Emilia at this time, it is better, I think, to ſuppoſe, as Chaucer has done, that they are not ſeen by her.

[11] En ſieme ſe fer feſta di bon core,
E li loro accidenti ſi narraro. Theſ. l. v.

This is ſurely too much in the ſtyle of Romance. Chaucer has made them converſe more naturally. He has alſo judiciouſly avoided to copy Boccace in repreſenting Arcite as more moderate than his rival.

he forgives them, and propoſes the method of deciding their claim to Emilia by a combat of an hundred on each ſide, to which they gladly agree.

B. VI. Palemone and Arcita live ſplendidly at Athens, and ſend out meſſengers to ſummon their friends, who arrive; and the principal of them are ſeverally deſcribed, viz. Lycurgus, Peleus, Phocus, Telamon, &c. Agamemnon, Menelaus, Caſtor, and Pollux, &c. Neſtor, Evander, Perithous, Ulyſſes, Diomedes, Pygmalion, Minos, &c. with a great diſplay of ancient hiſtory and mythology.

B. VII. Theſeus declares the laws of the combat, and the two parties of an hundred on each ſide are formed. The day before the combat, Arcita, after having viſited the temples of all the Gods, makes a formal prayer to Mars. The Prayer, *being perſonified* [12], is ſaid to go and find Mars in his temple

[12] Era alor forſi Marte in exercitio
Di chiara far la parte ruginoſa
Del grande ſuo e horribile hoſpitio,
Quando de Arcita LA ORATION pietoſa
Pervenne li per fare il dato offitio,
Tutta ne lo aſpecto lagrimoſa;
La qual divene di ſpavento muta,
Come di Marte hebbe laca veduta. Theſ. l. vii.

As this contrivance, of *perſonifying* the Prayers and ſending them to the ſeveral deities, is only in order to introduce a deſcription of the reſpective temples, it will be allowed, I believe, that Chaucer has attained the ſame end by a more natural fiction. It is very probable that Boccace caught the idea of making the Prayers *perſons* from Homer, with whoſe works he was better acquainted than moſt of his contemporaries in this part of the world; and there can be no doubt, I ſuppoſe, that Chaucer's imagination, in the expedient which he has ſubſtituted, was aſſiſted by the occaſional edifices which he had himſelf ſeen erected for the decoration of Turnaments.

The combat, which follows, having no foundation in ancient hiſtory or manners, it is no wonder that both poets ſhould have admitted a number of incongruous circumſtances into their deſcription of it. The great advantage which Chaucer has over his original in this reſpect is, that he is much ſhorter. When we have read in the Theſeida a long and learned catalogue of all the heroes of Antiquity brought together upon this occaſion, we

are

temple in Thrace, which is deſcribed; and Mars, upon underſtanding the meſſage, cauſes favourable ſigns to be given to Arcita. In the ſame manner Palemone cloſes his religious obſervances with a prayer to Venus. His Prayer, *being alſo perſonified*, ſets out for the temple of Venus on Mount Citherone, which is alſo deſcribed; and the petition is granted. Then the ſacrifice of Emilia to Diana is deſcribed; her prayer; the appearance of the Goddeſs; and the ſigns of the two fires.—In the morning they proceed to the Theatre with their reſpective troops, and prepare for the action. Arcita puts up a private prayer to Emilia, and harangues his troop publickly; and Palemone does the ſame.

B. VIII. Contains a deſcription of the battle, in which Palemone is taken priſoner.

B. IX. The horſe of Arcita, being frighted by a Fury, ſent from hell at the deſire of Venus, throws him. However, he is carried to Athens in a triumphal chariot with Emilia by his ſide; is put to bed dangerouſly ill; and there by his own deſire eſpouſes Emilia.

B. X. The funeral of the perſons killed in the combat. Arcita, being given over by his Phyſicians, makes his will, in diſcourſe with Theſeus, and deſires that Palemone may inherit all his poſſeſſions and alſo Emilia. He then takes leave of Palemone and Emilia, to whom he repeats the ſame requeſt. Their lamentations. Arcita orders a ſacrifice to Mercury, which Palemone performs for him, and dies.

B. XI.

are only the more ſurpriſed to ſee Theſeus, in ſuch an aſſembly, conferring the honour of Knighthood upon the two Theban chieftains.

E ſenza ſtare con non piccolo honore
Cinſe le ſpade a li dui ſcudieri,
E ad Arcita Poluce e Caſtore
Calciaro d'oro li ſproni e volontieri,
E Diomede e Ulixe di cuore
Calzati a Palemone, e cavalieri
Ambedui furono alora novelli
Li inamorati Theban damigieli. Theſ. l. vii.

B. XI. Opens with the paſſage of Arcita's ſoul to heaven, imitated from the beginning of the 9th Book of Lucan. The funeral of Arcita. Deſcription of the wood felled takes up ſix Stanzas. Palemone builds a temple in honour of him, in which his whole hiſtory is painted. The deſcription of this painting is an abridgement of the preceding part of the Poem.

B. XII. Theſeus propoſes to carry into execution Arcita's will by the marriage of Palemone and Emilia. This they both decline for ſome time in formal ſpeeches, but at laſt are perſuaded and married. The Kings, &c. take their leave, and Palemone remains—" in gioia e in diporto con la ſua dona nobile e corteſe."

From this ſketch of the Theſeida it is evident enough that Chaucer was obliged to Boccace [13] for the Plan and principal incidents of the KNIGHTES TALE; and in the Notes upon that tale I ſhall point out ſome paſſages, out of many more, which are literal tranſlations from the Italian.

§ x. When the *Knight* has finiſhed his Tale, the *Hoſt* with great propriety calls upon the *Monk*, as the next in rank among the men, to tell the next Tale; but, as it ſeems to have been the intention of Chaucer to avail himſelf of the variety of his Characters, in order to diſtribute alternate

[13] To whom Boccace was obliged is a more difficult ſubject of enquiry. That the Story was of his own invention, I think is ſcarcely credible. He ſpeaks of it himſelf as *very ancient*. [Lett. alla Fiammetta. *Biblioth. Smith. App.* p. cxli.] Trovata una antichiſſima Storia, e al più delle genti non manifeſta, in latino volgare, acciocchè più dilettaſſe e maſſimamente a voi, che già con ſommo titolo le mie rime eſaltaſte, ho ridotta. He then tells her, that ſhe will obſerve that what is related under the name of *one* of the two lovers and of Emilia, is very ſimilar to what had actually paſſed between herſelf and him; and adds—Se forſe alcune coſe ſoperchie vi foſſono, il voler bene coprire ciò che non era oneſto manifeſtare, da noi due in fuori, e'l volere la ſtoria ſeguire, ne ſono cagione. I am well aware however that declarations of this kind, prefixed to fabulous works, are not much to be depended upon. The wildeſt of the French Romances are commonly ſaid by the Authors to be tranſlated from ſome old *Latin* Chronicle at St. Denys. And certainly the Story of Palemone and Arcita, as related by Boccace, coud not be *very ancient*. If it was of Greek original, as I rather ſuſpect, it muſt have been thrown into its preſent form, after the

nate ſucceſſions of Serious and Comic, in nearly equal proportions, throughout his work, he has contrived, that the *Hoſtes* arrangement ſhall be ſet aſide by the intruſion of the *dronken Miller*, whoſe tale is ſuch as might be expected from his character and condition, a complete contraſt to the *Knightes*.

§ XI. I have not been able to diſcover from whence the Story of the MILLERS TALE is taken; ſo that for the preſent I muſt give Chaucer credit for it as his own invention, though in general he appears to have built his Tales, both ſerious and comic, upon ſtories, which he found ready made. The great difference is, that in his ſerious pieces he often follows his author with the ſervility of a mere tranſlator, and in conſequence his narration is jejune and conſtrained; whereas in the comic, he is generally ſatisfied with borrowing a ſlight hint of his ſubject, which he varies, enlarges, and embelliſhes at pleaſure, and gives the whole the air and colour of an original; a ſure ſign, that his genius rather led him to compoſitions of the latter kind.

§ XII. The next tale is told by the REVE (who is repreſented above, ver. 589. as "a cholerick man") in revenge of the *Miller's* tale. It has been generally ſaid to be borrowed from the *Decameron*, D. ix. N. 6. but I rather think that both Boccace and Chaucer, in this inſtance, have taken whatever they have in common from an old *Fabliau*, or *Conte*, of an anonymous French rimer, *De Gombert et des deux Clers*. The Reader may eaſily ſatisfy himſelf upon this head, by caſting his eye upon the French *Fabliau*, which has lately been printed with ſeveral others from Mss. in France. See *Fabliaux et Contes*, Paris, 1756. t. ii. p. 115—124.

§ XIII.

the Norman Princes had introduced the manners of Chivalry into their dominions in Sicily and Italy.

The Poem in modern Greek political verſes *De nuptiis Theſei et Emiliæ*, printed at Venice in 1529, is a mere tranſlation of the *Theſeida*. The Author has even tranſlated the preſatory epiſtle addreſſed by Boccace to the Fiammetta.

§ XIII. The COKES TALE is imperfect in all the Mss. which I have had an opportunity of examining. In Ms. A. it ſeems to have been entirely omitted; and indeed I cannot help ſuſpecting, that it was intended to be omitted, at leaſt in this place, as in the *Manciples Prologue*, when the *Coke* is called upon to tell a tale, there is no intimation of his having told one before. Perhaps our Author might think, that three tales of *harlotrie*, as he calls it, together would be too much. However, as it is ſufficiently certain, that the *Cokes* Prologue and the beginning of his Tale are genuine compoſitions, they have their uſual place in this Edition. There was not the ſame reaſon for inſerting the ſtory of GAMELYN, which in ſome Mss. is annexed to the *Cokes Tale*. It is not to be found in any of the Mss. of the firſt authority; and the manner, ſtyle, and verſification, all prove it to have been the work of an author much inferior to Chaucer. I did not therefore think myſelf warranted to publiſh it a ſecond time among the Canterbury Tales, though as a Relique of our antient Poetry, and the foundation, perhaps, of Shakeſpeare's *As you like it*, I coud have wiſhed to ſee it more accurately printed, than it is in the only edition which we have of it.

§ XIV. In the PROLOGUE TO THE MAN OF LAWES TALE Chaucer recalls our attention to the Action, if I may ſo call it, of his Drama, the journey of the Pilgrims. They had ſet out ſoon after *the day began to ſpring*, ver. 824 and f. When the *Reve* was beginning to tell his tale, they were in the neighbourhood of Deptford and Greenwich, and it was *half way prime*; that is, I ſuppoſe, *half way* paſt *prime*, about half hour after ſeven A. M. [ver. 3904, 5.]. How much further they were advanced upon their road at this time is not ſaid; but the hour of the day is pointed out to us by two circumſtances. We are firſt told [ver. 4422, 3.], that

—"the Sonne
The ark of his artificial day had ronne
The fourthe part and half an hour and more;"—

and ſecondly [ver. 4432.], that he was "five and forty degrees high;" and this

this laſt circumſtance is ſo confirmed by the mention of a correſponding phænomenon that it is impoſſible to ſuſpect any error in the number. The *equality in length* of ſhadows to their projecting bodies can only happen, when the Sun is at the height of *five and forty* degrees. Unfortunately however this deſcription, though ſeemingly intended to be ſo accurate, will neither enable us to conclude with the Mss. that it was "*ten of the clock*," nor to fix upon any other hour; as the two circumſtances juſt mentioned are not found to coincide in any part of the twenty-eighth, or of any other, day of April [14] in this climate. All that we can conclude with certainty is, that it was *not paſt* ten of the clock.

The compliments which Chaucer has introduced upon his own writings are modeſt enough, and quite unexceptionable; but if the reflection [ver. 4497. and f.] upon thoſe who relate ſuch ſtories as that of *Canace*, or of *Apollonius Tyrius*, was levelled at Gower, as I very much ſuſpect, it will be difficult to reconcile ſuch an attack to our notions of the ſtrict friendſhip, which is generally ſuppoſed to have ſubſiſted between the two bards [15]. The attack too at this time muſt appear the more extraordinary on

[14] The twenty-eighth day of April, in the time of Chaucer, anſwering to our 6th or 7th of May, the Sun, in the latitude of London, roſe about half hour after four, and the length of the artificial day was a little more than fifteen hours. *A fourth part* of 15 hours (= $3^h.45^m.$) *and half an hour and more*—may be fairly computed to make together 4 hours $\frac{1}{2}$, which being reckoned from $4\frac{1}{2}$ A. M. give the time of the day exactly 9, A. M. But the Sun was not at the altitude of 45°, till above half hour after 9. In like manner, if we take the eighteenth day (according to all the Editions and ſome Mss.) we ſhall find that the Sun indeed was 45° high at 10, A. M. exactly, but that *the fourth part* of the day *and half an hour and more* had been completed at 9, A. M.

In this uncertainty, I have left the text as I found it in all the beſt Mss. Only Ms. HA. does not expreſs the hour, but reads thus:—

Yt was atte cloke—.

[15] There is another circumſtance, which rather inclines me to believe, that their friendſhip ſuffered ſome interruption in the latter part of their lives. In the new edition of the *Confeſſio Amantis*, which Gower publiſhed after the acceſſion of Henry IV, the verſes in

 praiſe

on the part of our bard, as he is juſt going to put into the mouth of his *Man of Lawe* a tale, of which almoſt every circumſtance is borrowed from Gower. The fact is, that the ſtory of *Canace* is related by Gower in his *Conf. Amant.* B. iii. and the ſtory of [16]*Apollonius* (or *Apollynus*, as he is there called) in the VIIIth book of the ſame work; ſo that, if Chaucer really did not mean to reflect upon his old friend, his choice of theſe two inſtances was rather unlucky.

§ XV.

praiſe of Chaucer [fol. 190. b. col. 1. ed. 1532.] are omitted. See Ms. *Harl.* 3869. Though perhaps the death of Chaucer at that time had rendered the compliment contained in thoſe verſes leſs proper than it was at firſt, that alone does not ſeem to have been a ſufficient reaſon for omitting them, eſpecially as the original date of the work, in the 16 of Richard II, is preſerved. Indeed the only other alterations, which I have been able to diſcover, are toward the beginning and end, where every thing which had been ſaid in praiſe of Richard in the firſt edition, is either left out or converted to the uſe of his ſucceſſor.

[16] The Hiſtory of *Apollonius King of Tyre* was ſuppoſed by Mark Welſer, when he printed it in 1595, to have been tranſlated from the Greek a thouſand years before. [Fabr. Bib. Gr. V. 6. p. 821.] It certainly bears ſtrong marks of a Greek original, though it is not, that I know, now extant in that language. The Rythmical poem, under the ſame title, in modern Greek, was re-tranſlated (if I may ſo ſpeak) from the Latin—απο Λατινικης εις Ρωμαϊκην γλωσσαν. *Du Cange*, Index Author. *ad Gloſſ. Græc.* When Welſer printed it, he probably did not know that it had been publiſhed already, perhaps more than once, among the *Geſta Romanorum*. In an edition, which I have, printed at Rouen in 1521, it makes the 154th chapter. Toward the latter end of the XIIth Century, *Godfrey of Viterbo*, in his *Pantheon*, or univerſal Chronicle, inſerted this Romance as part of the hiſtory of the third Antiochus, about 200 years before Chriſt. It begins thus [Ms. *Reg.* 14 C. xi.]:

Filia Seleuci regis ſtat clara decore
Matreque defunctâ pater arſit in ejus amore.
Res habet effectum, preſſa puella dolet.

The reſt is in the ſame metre, with one Pentameter only to two Hexameters.

Gower, by his own acknowledgement, took his Story from the *Pantheon*; as the Author, whoever he was, of *Pericles Prince of Tyre* profeſſes to have followed Gower.

§ XV. THE MAN OF LAWES TALE, as I have juſt ſaid, is taken, with very little variation, from Gower, *Conf. Amant.* B. ii. If there coud be any doubt, upon a curſory peruſal of the two tales, which of them was written firſt, the following paſſage, I think, is ſufficient to decide the queſtion. At ver. 5506, Chaucer ſays,—

> Som men wold ſayn, how that the child Maurice
> Doth this meſſage until this Emperour :—

and we read in Gower, that Maurice is actually ſent upon this meſſage to the Emperour. We may therefore fairly conclude that in this paſſage Chaucer alludes to Gower, who had treated the ſame ſubject before him, but, as he inſinuates, with leſs propriety.

I do not however ſuppoſe that Gower was the inventor of this tale. It had probably paſſed through ſeveral hands before it came to him. I find among the *Cotton* Mss. Cal. A. ii. fol. 69. an old Engliſh Rime, entitled "*Emare*," in which the heroine under that name goes through a ſeries of adventures for the moſt part [17] exactly ſimilar to thoſe of Conſtance. But neither was the author of this Rime the inventor of the ſtory, for in fol. 70. a. he refers to his original "*in Romans*," or French; and in the laſt Stanza he tells us expreſsly—

> Thys ys on of *Brytayne layes*
> That was uſed by olde dayes.

Of the *Britaine layes* I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more at large, when I come to the *Frankelein's Tale*.

§ XVI. *The Man of Lawes Tale* in the beſt Mss. is followed by the *Wife of Bathes Prologue and Tale*, and therefore I have placed them ſo here; not however

[17] The chief differences are, that *Emarè* is originally expoſed in a boat for refuſing to comply with the inceſtuous deſires of the Emperour her father; that ſhe is driven on the coaſt of *Galys*, or Wales, and married to the king of that country. The contrivances of the ſtep-mother, and the conſequences of them, are the ſame in both ſtories.

however merely in compliance with authority, but becauſe, according to the common arrangement, in the *Merchant's Tale* [18] there is a direct reference to the *Wife of Bathes Prologue*, before it has been ſpoken. Such an impropriety I was glad to remove upon the authority of the beſt Mss. though it had been acquieſced in by all former Editors; eſpecially as the ſame Mss. pointed out to me an other, I believe the true, place for both the *Merchant's* and the *Squier's* Tales, which have hitherto been printed immediately after the *Man of Lawes*. But of that hereafter.

§ XVII. The want of a few lines to introduce the WIFE OF BATHES PROLOGUE is, perhaps, one of thoſe defects, hinted at above, which Chaucer would have ſupplied if he had lived to finiſh his work. The extraordinary length of it, as well as the vein of pleaſantry that runs through it, is very ſuitable to the character of the ſpeaker. The greateſt part muſt have been of Chaucer's own invention, though one may plainly ſee that he had been reading the popular invectives againſt marriage and women in general; ſuch as, the ROMAN DE LA ROSE; VALERIUS AD RUFINUM *de non ducendâ uxore*; and particularly HIERONYMUS *contra Jovinianum* [19].

§ XIII.

[18] V. 9559. *Juſtine* ſays to his brother *January*—

> The Wif of Bathe, if ye han underſtonde,
> Of mariage, which ye now han in honde,
> Declared hath ful wel in litel ſpace—

alluding very plainly to this *Prologue* of the *Wife of Bath*. The impropriety of ſuch an alluſion in the mouth of *Juſtine* is groſs enough. The truth is, that Chaucer has inadvertently given to *a character in the Merchant's Tale* an argument which *the Merchant himſelf* might naturally have uſed upon a ſimilar occaſion, *after* he had heard the *Wife of Bath*. If we ſuppoſe, with the Editions, *that the Wife of Bath had not at that time ſpoken her Prologue*, the impropriety will be increaſed to an incredible degree.

[19] The holy Father, by way of recommending celibacy, has exerted all his learning and eloquence (and he certainly was not deficient in either) to collect together and aggravate whatever he coud find to the prejudice of the female ſex. Among other things he has inſerted his own tranſlation (probably) of a long extract from what he calls—"*liber aureolus Theophraſti de nuptiis.*"

Next

§ XVIII. THE WIFE OF BATHES TALE ſeems to have been taken from the Story of *Florent* in Gower, *Conf. Amant.* B. i. or perhaps from an older narrative, in the *Geſta Romanorum*, or ſome ſuch collection, from which the Story of Florent was itſelf borrowed. However that may have been, it muſt be allowed that Chaucer has conſiderably improved the fable by lopping off ſome improbable, as well as unneceſſary, circumſtances; and the transferring of the ſcene from Sicily to the Court of King Arthur muſt have had a very pleaſing effect, before the fabulous majeſty of that court was quite obliterated.

The old Ballad entitled "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine," [*Ancient Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 11.] which the learned Editor thinks may have furniſhed Chaucer with this tale, I ſhould rather conjecture, with deference to ſo good a judge in theſe matters, to have been compoſed by one who had read both Gower and Chaucer.

§ XIX. THE TALES of THE FRERE and THE SOMPNOUR are well ingrafted upon that of the *Wife of Bath*. The ill humour which ſhews itſelf between thoſe two characters is quite natural, as no two profeſſions at that time were at more conſtant variance. The Regular Clergy, and particularly the Mendicant Freres, affected a total exemption from all Eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, except that of the Pope, which made them exceedingly obnoxious to the Biſhops, and of courſe to all the inferior officers of the national hierarchy.

I have

Next to him in order of time was the treatiſe entitled "*Epiſtola Valerii ad Ruſinum de non ducendâ uxore.*" Ms. *Reg.* 12 D. iii. It has been printed, for the ſimilarity of its ſentiments, I ſuppoſe, among the works of St. Jerome, though it is evidently of a much later date. Tanner (from Wood's Ms. Coll.) attributes it to *Walter Map*. Bib. Brit. v. MAP. I ſhould not believe it to be older; as John of Saliſbury, who has treated of the ſame ſubject in his *Polycrat.* l. viii. c. xi. does not appear to have ſeen it.

To theſe two books *Jean de Meun* has been obliged for ſome of the ſevereſt ſtrokes in his *Roman de la Roſe*; and Chaucer has transfuſed the quinteſſence of all the three works, upon the ſubject of Matrimony, into his *Wife of Bathes Prologue* and *Merchant's Tale*.

I have not been able to trace either of theſe tales to any author older than Chaucer, and poſſibly they may both have been built upon ſome traditional pleaſantries, which were never before committed to writing.

§ XX. THE CLERKES TALE is in a different ſtrain from the three preceding. He tells us, in his *Prologue*, that he learned it *from Petrarch at Padua*; and this, by the way, is all the ground that I can find for the notion that Chaucer had ſeen Petrarch[20] in Italy. It is not eaſy to ſay why Chaucer

[20] I can find no older or better authority for this notion than the following paſſage in *Speght's* life of Chaucer, prefixed to the Edition in 1597. "Some write, that he with Petrarke was preſent at the marriage of Lionell Duke of Clarence with Violante daughter of Galeaſius, Duke of Millaine: yet Paullus Jovius nameth not Chaucer; but Petrarke, he ſayth, was there." It appears from an inſtrument in Rymer [*Liberat.* 42 E. III. m. 1.], that the Duke of Clarence paſſed from Dover to Calais, in his way to Milan, in the ſpring of 1368, with a retinue of 457 men and 1280 horſes. That Chaucer might have attended the Duke upon this occaſion is not impoſſible. He had been, probably, for ſome time in the king's ſervice, and had received the year before a Grant of an annuity of 20 Marks—pro bono ſervitio, quod dilectus Valettus noſter, Galfridus Chaucer nobis impendit et impendet in futurum. *Pat.* 41 E. III. p. 1. m. 13. ap. Rymer. There is a curious account of the feaſt at this marriage in the *Chronica di Mantoua* of *Aliprandi* [Murator. *Antiq. Med. Ævi*, vol. v. p. 1187, & ſeq.], but he does not give the names of the

"Grandi Signori e Baroni Inghileſe,

who were, as he ſays,

"Con Meſſere Lionell' in compagnia."

The moſt conſiderable of them were probably thoſe 26 (Knights and others) who, before their ſetting out for Milan, procured the King's licence to appoint Attorneys general to act for them here. *Franc.* 42 E. III. m. 8. ap. Rymer. The name of Chaucer does not appear among them.

The embaſſy to *Genoa*, to which Chaucer was appointed in November 1372, might poſſibly have afforded him another opportunity of ſeeing Petrarch. But in the firſt place, it is uncertain whether he ever went upon that Embaſſy. If he did, the diſtance from *Genoa* to *Padua*, where Petrarch reſided, is conſiderable; and I cannot help thinking that a reverential viſit *from a Miniſter of the King of England* would have been ſo flattering to the old

Chaucer ſhould chooſe to own an obligation for this tale to Petrarch rather than to Boccace, from whoſe *Decameron*, D. x. N. 10. it was tranſlated by Petrarch in 1373, the year before his death, as appears by a remarkable letter, which he ſent with his tranſlation to Boccace. *Opp. Petrarch.* p. 540—7. Ed. Baſ. 1581. It ſhould ſeem too from the ſame letter, that the ſtory was not invented by Boccace, for Petrarch ſays, "that it had always pleaſed him *when he heard it many years before*," [21] whereas he had not ſeen the *Decameron* till very lately.

§ XXI.

old man, that either he himſelf or ſome of his biographers muſt have recorded it. On the other hand, ſuppoſing Chaucer at *Genoa*, it is to be preſumed, that he would not have been deterred by the difficulties of a much longer journey from paying his reſpects to the firſt literary character of the age: and it is remarkable, that the time of this embaſſy, in 1373, is the preciſe time at which he coud have learned the ſtory of Griſeldis *from Petrarch at Padua*. For Petrarch in all probability made his tranſlation *in that very year*, and he died in July of the year following.

The inquiſitive and judicious author of *Mémoires pour la vie de Petrarque* gave us hopes [Pref. to t. ii. p. 6.], that he would ſhew, that Chaucer was in connexion *(en liaiſon)* with Petrarch. As he has not fulfilled his promiſe in a later (I fear, the laſt) volume of his very ingenious work, I ſuſpect that his more accurate reſearches have not enabled him to verify an opinion, which he probably at firſt adopted upon the credit of ſome biographer of Chaucer.

[21] —Cum et mihi ſemper *ante multos annos audita* placuiſſet, et tibi uſque adeo placuiſſe perpenderem, ut vulgari eam ſtylo tuo cenſueris non indignam, et fine operis, ubi rhetorum diſciplina validiora quælibet collocari jubet. *Petrarch. loc. cit.* M. L'Abbé de Sade [*Mem. de Petr.* t. iii. p. 797.] ſays, that the Story of Griſeldis is taken from an ancient Ms. in the library of M. Foucault, entitled, *Le parement des Dames*. If this ſhould have been ſaid upon the authority of *Manni* [Iſt. del Decam. p. 603.], as I very much ſuſpect, and if *Manni* himſelf meant to refer to M. Galland's *Diſcours ſur quelques anciens Poetes* [Mem. de l'Acad. des I. et B. L. t. ii. p. 686.], we muſt look ſtill further for the original of Boccace's Novel. M. Galland ſays nothing, as I obſerve, of the *antiquity* of the Ms. Le titre (he ſays) eſt *Le parement des Dames*, avec des explications en Proſe, où l'on trouve l'hiſtoire de Griſelidis que feu M. Perrault a miſe en vers: but he ſays alſo expreſsly, that it was a work of *Olivier de la Marche*, who was not born till many years after the death of Boccace.

§ XXI. In the *Ballade*, with which *the Clerk* concludes his Tale, I have changed the order of the three laſt Stanzas, ſo as to make it end—

And let him *care*, and *wepe*, and wringe, and *waile*—

and immediately after I have placed the MARCHANTS PROLOGUE, beginning—

Weping and *wailing*, *care* and other ſorwe
I have enough—.

This arrangement, which recommends itſelf at firſt ſight, is alſo ſupported by ſo many Mss. of the beſt authority, that, without great negligence or dullneſs, I coud not have either overlooked or rejected it, eſpecially as the whole turn of the *Marchant's Prologue*, and the expreſs mention of *Griſilde* in ver. 9100. demonſtrate, that he is ſuppoſed to ſpeak with the *Clerke's Tale* freſh in his memory.

§ XXII. The ſcene of the MARCHANTS TALE is laid in Italy, but none of the names, except Damian and Juſtin, ſeem to be Italian, but rather made at pleaſure; ſo that I doubt whether the ſtory be really of Italian growth. The adventure of *the Pear-tree* I find in a ſmall collection of Latin fables, written by one Adolphus, in Elegiac verſes of his faſhion, in the year 1315. As this fable has never been printed but once, and in a book not commonly to be met with, I ſhall tranſcribe below [22] the material

[22] *Adolphi Fabulæ*, ap. Leyſer. Hiſt. Poet. Medii Ævi, p. 2008.

Fabula I.

Cæcus erat quidam, cui pulcra virago—
— — — — — —
In curtis viridi reſident hi ceſpite quâdam
Luce. Petit mulier robur adire Pyri.
Vir favet, amplectens mox robur ubique lacertis.
Arbor adunca fuit, qua latuit juvenis.
Amplexatur eam dans baſia dulcia. Terram
Incepit colere vomere cum proprio.

Audit

rial parts of it, and I dare ſay the Reader will not be very anxious to ſee any more.

Whatever was the real original of this Tale, the Machinery of the Faeries, which Chaucer has uſed ſo happily, was probably added by himſelf; and indeed, I cannot help thinking, that his *Pluto* and *Proſerpina* were the true progenitors of *Oberon* and *Titania* [23], or rather, that they themſelves have

Audit vir ſtrepitum : nam ſæpe carentia ſenſus
Unius in reliquo, noſco, vigere ſolet.
Heu miſer ! exclamat ; te lædit adulter ibidem.
Conqueror hoc illi qui dedit eſſe mihi.
Tunc Deus omnipotens, qui condidit omnia verbo,
Qui ſua membra probat, vaſcla velut figulus,
Reſtituens aciem miſero, tonat illico ; Fallax
Femina, cur tantâ fraude nocere cupis ?
— — — — — — —
Percipit illa virum. Vultu reſpondet alacri :
Magna dedi medicis ; non tibi cura fuit.
Aſt, ubi luſtra ſua ſatis uda petebat Apollo,
Candida ſplendeſcens Cynthia luce merâ,
Tunc ſopor irrepſit mea languida corpora : quædam
Aſtitit : inſonuit auribus illa meis.
Ludere cum juvene ſtudeas in roboris alto ;
Priſca viro dabitur lux cito, crede mihi.
Quod feci. Dominus ideo tibi munera lucis
Contulit : idcirco munera redde mihi.
Addidit ille fidem mulieri, de prece cujus
Se ſanum credit, mittit et omne nefas.
— — — — — —

The ſame ſtory is inſerted among *The Fables of Alphonſe*, printed by Caxton in Engliſh, with thoſe of *Æſop, Avian and Pogge*, without date ; but I do not find it in the original Latin of Alphonſus, Ms. Reg. 10. B. xii. or in any of the French tranſlations of his work that I have examined.

[23] This obſervation is not meant to extend further than *the King and Queen* of Faery ; in whoſe characters, I think it is plain, that Shakeſpeare, in imitation of Chaucer, has dignified our Gothic Elves with the manners and language of the claſſical Gods and Goddeſſes.

have, once at leaſt, deigned to reviſit our poetical ſyſtem under the latter names.

§ XXIII. THE PROLOGUE to *the Squier's Tale* appears now for the firſt time in print. Why it has been omitted by all former Editors I cannot gueſs, except, perhaps, becauſe it did not ſuit with the place, which, for reaſons beſt known to themſelves, they were determined to aſſign to *the Squier's Tale*, that is, after *the Man of Lawe's* and before *the Marchant's*. I have choſen rather to follow the Mss. of the beſt authority in placing *the Squier's Tale* after *the Marchant's*, and in connecting them together by this Prologue, agreeably, as I am perſuaded, to Chaucer's intention. The lines which have uſually been printed by way of Prologue to *the Squier's Tale*, as I believe them to have been really compoſed by Chaucer, though not intended for *the Squier's* Prologue, I have prefixed to *the Shipman's Tale*, for reaſons, which I ſhall give when I come to ſpeak of that Tale.

§ XXIV. I ſhould have been very happy if the Mss. which have furniſhed the SQUIERS Prologue, had ſupplied the deficient part of his TALE, but I fear the judgement of Milton was too true, that this ſtory was "*left half-told*" by the author. I have never been able to diſcover the probable original of this tale, and yet I ſhould be very hardly brought to believe that the whole, or even any conſiderable part of it, was of Chaucer's invention.

§ XXV. We are now arrived with the common Editions, though by a different courſe, at the FRANKELEINES TALE; and here again we muſt be obliged to the Mss. not indeed, as in the laſt inſtance, for a *new* Prologue, but for authoriſing us to prefix to this Tale of *the Frankelein* a Prologue, which in the common Editions is prefixed to the Tale of *the Marchant*,

deſſes. In the reſt of his Faery ſyſtem, Shakeſpeare ſeems to have followed the popular ſuperſtition of his own time.

chant, together with the true Prologue of that Tale, as printed above. It is ſcarce conceivable how theſe two Prologues coud ever be joined together and given to the ſame character, as they are not only entirely unconnected, but alſo in one point directly contradictory to each other; for in that, which is properly *the Marchant's*, he ſays expreſsly [ver. 9110.], that he had been married "*two monthes* and not more;" whereas in the other, the Speaker's chief diſcourſe is about *his ſon*, who is *grown up*. THIS therefore, upon the authority of the beſt Mss. I have reſtored to *the Frankelein*; and I muſt obſerve, that the ſentiments of it are much more ſuitable to *his* character than to that of *the Marchant*. It is quite natural, that a wealthy land-holder, of a generous diſpoſition, as he is deſcribed [ver. 333—62.], who has been Sheriff, Knight of the Shire, &c. ſhould be anxious to ſee his ſon, as we ſay, *a Gentleman*, and that he ſhould talk ſlightingly of money in compariſon with poliſhed manners and virtuous endowments; but neither the character which Chaucer has drawn of *his Marchant*, nor our general notions of the profeſſion *at that time*, prepare us to expect from him ſo liberal a ſtrain of thinking.

§ XXVI. THE FRANKELEINS TALE, as he tells us himſelf, is taken from a *Britiſh Lay*[24]; and the names of perſons and places, as well as the ſcene

[24] Les premieres Chanſons Françoiſes furent nommées des LAIS; ſays M. de la Ravaliere, *Poeſ. du Roi. de Nav.* t. i. p. 215. And ſo far I believe he is right. But I ſee no foundation for ſuppoſing with him, in the ſame page, that the LAY was *une ſorte d'Elegie*, and that it was derived *du mot Latin* Leſſus, *qui ſignifie des plaintes*; or [in p. 217.] that it was *la chanſon—la plus majeſtueuſe et la plus grave*. It ſeems more probable that *Lai* in French was anciently a generical term, anſwering to *Song* in Engliſh. The paſſage which M. de la Ravaliere has quoted from *Le Brut*,

"Molt ſot de *Lais*, molt ſot de notes"—

is thus rendered by our *Layamon*. [See before, Eſſay, &c. n. 46.]

Ne cuthe na mon ſwa muchel of *ſong*.

The ſame word is uſed by Peirol d'Alvergna, Ms. Crofts, fol. lxxxv. to denote the *ſongs* of *birds*, certainly not of the *plaintive* kind.

Et

ſcene and circumſtances of the ſtory, make this account extremely probable. The Lay itſelf is either loſt, or buried, perhaps for ever, in one of thoſe

Et li auſell s'en van enamoran
L'uns per l'autre, et fan vantas (or *cantas)* et *lais*.

For my own part I am inclined to believe, that *Liod*, Iſland. *Lied*, Teuton. *Leoth*, Saxon, and *Lai*, French, are all to be deduced from the ſame Gothic original.

But beſide this general ſenſe, the name of *Lay* was particularly given to *the French tranſlations* of certain Poems, originally compoſed in Armorican Bretagne, and in the Armorican language. I ſay *the French tranſlations*, becauſe *Lay*, not being (as I can find) an Armorican word, coud hardly have been the name, by which a ſpecies of Poetry, not imported from France, was diſtinguiſhed by the firſt compoſers in Bretagne.

The chief, perhaps the only, collection of theſe *Lais* that is now extant, was tranſlated into French octoſyllable verſe by a Poeteſs, who calls herſelf *Marie*; the ſame, without doubt, who made the tranſlation of *Eſope*, quoted by Paſquier [*Rech.* l. viii. ch. i.] and Fauchet [L. ii. n. 84.], and placed by them in the reign of St. Louis, about the middle of the XIIIth Century. Both her works have been preſerved together in Ms. *Harl.* 978. in a fair hand, which I ſee no reaſon to judge more recent than the latter end of that Century.

The *Lais*, with which only we are at preſent concerned, were addreſſed by her to ſome king. Fol. 139.

En le honur de vous, *noble reis*,
Ki tant eſtes pruz e curteis,
A ki tute joie ſe encline,
E en ki quoer tuz biens racine,
M'entremis des *lais* aſſembler,
Par rime faire e reconter.—

A few lines after, ſhe names herſelf.

Oez, Seignurs, ke dit *Marie*.

The titles of the Poems in this collection, to the number of twelve, are recited in the Harleian Catalogue. They are, in general, the names of the principal perſons in the ſeveral Stories, and are moſt of them evidently Armorican; and I think no one can read the Stories themſelves without being perſuaded, that they were either really tranſlated from the Armorican language, or at leaſt compoſed by one who was well acquainted with that language and country.

Though

thoſe ſepulchres of Mss. which, by courteſy, are called Libraries; but there are two imitations of it extant by Boccace, the firſt in the vth Book of

Though theſe Poems of Marie have of late been ſo little known as to have entirely eſcaped the reſearches of Fauchet and other French Antiquaries, they were formerly in high eſtimation. *Denis Piramus*, a very tolerable verſifier of the *Legend of St. Edmund the King* [Ms. *Cotton.* Dom. A. xi.], allows that *Dame Marie*, as he calls her, had great merit in the compoſition of her LAYS, *though they are not all true*—

E ſi en eſt ele mult loee,
E la ryme par tut amee.

A tranſlation of her *Lays*, as it ſhould ſeem, into one of the Northern languages was among the books given by Gabriel de la Gardie to the Univerſity of Upſal, under the title of *Variæ Britannorum Fabulæ*. See the deſcription of the book by Stephanius, in Cat. Libb. Septent. at the end of Hickes, Gr. A. S. edit. 1689, 4to. p. 180. That Chaucer had read them I think extremely probable, not only from a paſſage in his Dreme [ver. 1820—1926.], which ſeems to have been copied from the *Lay of Elidus*, but alſo from the manner in which he makes the Frankelein ſpeak of the Bretons and their compoſitions. See the note on ver. 11021.

However, in Chaucer's time, there were other *Britiſh Lays* extant beſide this collection by Marie. *Emarè* has been mentioned before, § xv. An old Engliſh *Ballad of Sir Gowther* [Ms. *Reg.* 17 B. xliii.] is ſaid by the writer to have been taken *out of one of the Layes of Britanye:* in another place he ſays—*the firſt Lay of Britanye*. The original of *the Frankelein's Tale* was probably a third. There were alſo *Lays*, which did not pretend to be *Britiſh*, as *Le Lay d'Ariſtote*, *Li Lais de l'Oiſelet* [Fabliaux, tom. i.]. *Le Lai du Corn* by Robert Bikez [Ms. *Bod.* 1687.] is ſaid by him to have been invented by *Garaduc*, who accompliſhed the adventure. In the Ballad, entitled "THE BOY AND THE MANTLE," [Anc. Poet. v. iii. p. 1.] which I ſuſpect to have been made up out of *this Lay* and *Le Court Mantel*, the ſucceſsful knight is called *Cradock*. Robert Bikez ſays further, that the Horn was ſtill to be ſeen at Cirenceſter.

Q'fuſt a *Cirincetre*
A une haute feſte,
La pureit il veer
Iceſt corn tout pur veir.
Ceo diſt *Robert Bikez*—

In none of theſe Lays do we find the qualities attributed to that ſort of compoſition by M. de la Ravaliere. According to theſe examples we ſhould rather define the Lay to be a ſpecies

of his *Philocopo*, and the ſecond in the *Decameron*, D. x. N. 5. They agree in every reſpect with each other, except that the ſcene and the names are different, and in the latter the narration is leſs prolix and the ſtyle leſs flowery than in the former, which was a juvenile work [25]. The only material point, in which Boccace ſeems to have departed from his original, is this; inſtead of "*the removal of the rockes*" the Lady deſires "*a garden, full of the flowers and fruits of May, in the month of January*;" and ſome ſuch alteration was certainly neceſſary, when the ſcene came to be removed from

ſpecies of *ſerious* narrative poetry, of *a moderate length*, in a ſimple ſtyle and *light metre*. *Serious* is here oppoſed (not to *pleaſant*, but) to *ludicrous*, in order to diſtinguiſh the Lay from the *Conte* or *Fabliau*; as on the other hand its *moderate length* diſtinguiſhes it from the *Geſte*, or common *Roman*. All the Lays that I have ſeen are in *light metre*, not exceeding eight ſyllables. See before, Eſſay, &c. n. 60.

[25] I ſaw once an Edition of the *Philocopo*, printed at Venice, 1503, fol. with a letter at the end of it, in which the Publiſher Hieronymo Squarzaſicho ſays (if I do not miſremember), "that this work was written by Boccace at twenty-five years of age (about 1338), while he was at Naples in the houſe of John Barrile." *Johannes Barrillus* is called by Boccace [*Geneal. Deor.* l. xiv. c. 19.] *magni ſpiritus homo*. He was ſent by King Robert to attend Petrarch to his coronation at Rome, and is introduced by the latter in his ſecond Eclogue under the name of *Idæus*; ab Idâ, monte Cretenſi, unde et ipſe oriundus fuit. *Intentiones Eclogarum Franc. Petrarchæ*, Ms. *Bod.* 558. Not knowing at preſent where to find that Edition, I am obliged to rely upon my memory only for this ſtory, which I think highly probable, though it is not mentioned, as I recollect, by any of the other Biographers of Boccace. A good life of Boccace is ſtill much wanted.

The adventures of *Florio* and *Biancofiore*, which make the principal ſubject of the *Philocopo*, were famous long before Boccace, as he himſelf informs us, l. i. p. 6. Ed. 1723. Hieronymo Squarzaſicho, in the letter mentioned above, ſays, that the ſtory "anchora ſi nova inſino ad ogi ſcripta in un librazolo de triſte et male compoſto rime—dove il Boccaccio ni cavo queſto digno et elegante libro." *Floris* and *Blancaflor* are mentioned as illuſtrious lovers by *Matfres Eymengau de Bezers*, a Languedocian Poet, in his *Breviari d'amor* dated in the year 1288. Ms. *Reg.* 19 C. i. fol. 199. It is probable however that the Story was enlarged by Boccace, and particularly I ſhould ſuppoſe that the *Love-queſtions* in l. v. (the fourth of which queſtions contains the Novel referred to in the text) were added by him.

from Bretagne to Spain and Italy, as it is in Boccace's novels [26]. I ſhould gueſs that Chaucer has preſerved pretty faithfully the principal incidents of the *Britiſh tale*, though he has probably thrown in ſome ſmaller circumſtances to embelliſh his narration. The long liſt of virtuous women in Dorigene's Soliloquy is plainly copied from HIERONYMUS *contra Jovinianum*.

§ XXVII. Thus far I flatter myſelf I have been not unſucceſsful in reſtoring the true order, and connexion with each other, of the *Clerkes*, the *Marchantes*, the *Squieres*, and the *Frankeleines* Tales, but with regard to the next ſtep, which I have taken, I muſt own myſelf more dubious. In all the editions the Tales of *the Nonne* and *the Chanones Yeman* precede *the Doctoures*, but the beſt Mss. agree in removing thoſe Tales to the end of *the Nonnes Preeſtes*, and I have not ſcrupled to adopt this arrangement, which, I think, is indiſputably eſtabliſhed by the following conſideration. When *the Monk* is called upon for his Tale the Pilgrims were near Rocheſter [ver. 13932.], but when *the Chanon* overtakes them they were advanced to Boughton under Blee [ver. 16024.], twenty miles beyond Rocheſter, ſo that the Tale of *the Chanones Yeman*, and that of *the Nonne* to which it is annexed, cannot with any propriety be admitted till after *the Monkes* Tale, and conſequently not till after *the Nonnes Preeſtes*, which is inſeparably linked to that of *the Monk*.

§ XXVIII. Theſe two Tales therefore of *the Nonne* and *the Chanones Yeman* being removed out of the way, *the Doctoures* comes clearly next to *the Frankeleines*; but how they are to be connected together, and whether at all, is a matter of doubt. What I have printed by way of *Prologue* to the *Doctoures* Tale I found in one of the beſt Mss. but only in one: in the

[26] The *Conte Boiardo*, the precurſor and model of Arioſto, in his *Orlando inamorato*, l. i. ca. 12. has inſerted a Tale upon the plan of Boccace's two novels, but with conſiderable alterations, which have carried the Story, I apprehend, ſtill further from its *Britiſh* original.

the others it has no Prologue. The firſt line applies ſo naturally and ſmartly to *the Frankeleines* concluſion, that I am ſtrongly inclined to believe it from the hand of Chaucer, but I cannot ſay ſo much for the five following. I would therefore only wiſh theſe lines to be received for the preſent, according to the Law-phraſe, *de bene eſſe*, till they ſhall either be more authentically eſtabliſhed, or ſuperſeded by the diſcovery of the genuine Prologue.

§ XXIX. In THE DOCTOURES TALE, beſide Livy, who is quoted, Chaucer may poſſibly have followed Gower in ſome particulars, who has alſo related the Story of Virginia, *Conf. Amant.* B. vii. but he has not been a ſervile copyiſt of either of them.

§ XXX. *The Pardoneres Tale* has a *Prologue* which connects it with *the Doctoures*. There is alſo a pretty long preamble, which may either make part of the Prologue, or of the Tale. The Mss. differ in this point. I have choſen to throw it into the Tale, and to confine the Prologue to what I ſuppoſe to be its proper uſe, the introduction of the new Speaker. When he is once in complete poſſeſſion of his office of entertaining the company, his Prefaces or Digreſſions ſhould all, I think, be equally conſidered as parts of his Tale.

The mere outline of THE PARDONERES TALE is to be found in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*. Nov. lxxxii.

§ XXXI. The Tale of *the Shipman* in the beſt Mss. has no *Prologue*. What has been printed as ſuch in the common Editions is evidently ſpurious. To ſupply this defect I have ventured, upon the authority of one Ms. (and, I confeſs, not one of the beſt) to prefix to this Tale the *Prologue*, which has uſually been prefixed to the Tale of *the Squier*. As this Prologue was undoubtedly compoſed by Chaucer, it muſt have had a place ſomewhere in this Edition, and if I cannot prove that it was really intended by him for this place, I think the Reader will allow that it fills the vacancy extremely well. *The Pardoneres tale* may very properly be called

" *a thrifty*

"*a thrifty tale,*" and he himſelf "*a learned man*" [ver. 12905—8.]; and all the latter part, though highly improper in the mouth of the "*curteis Squier,*" is perfectly ſuited to the character of *the Shipman*.

This tale is generally ſuppoſed to be taken from the *Decameron*. D. viii. N. 1. but I ſhould rather believe that Chaucer was obliged to ſome old French *Fableour*, from whom Boccace had alſo borrowed the ground-work of his Novel, as in the caſe of *the Reves* Tale. Upon either ſuppoſition, a great part of the incidents muſt probably have been of his own invention.

§ XXXII. The tranſition from the Tale of *the Shipman* to that of *the Prioreſſe* is happily managed. I have not been able to diſcover from what Legende of the Miracles of our Lady THE PRIORESSES TALE is taken. From the ſcene being laid in Aſia, it ſhould ſeem, that this was one of the oldeſt of the many ſtories, which have been propagated, at different times, to excite or juſtify ſeveral mercileſs perſecutions of the Jews, upon the charge of murthering Chriſtian children [27]. The ſtory of *Hugh of Lincoln*, which is mentioned in the laſt Stanza, is placed by Matthew Paris under the year 1255.

§ XXXIII.

[27] In the firſt four months of the *Acta Sanctorum* by Bollandus, I find the following names of Children canonized, as having been murthered by Jews: xxv Mart. *Willielmus Norwicenſis*. 1144. *Richardus, Pariſiis*. 1179. xvii Apr. *Rudolphus, Bernæ*. 1287. *Wernerus, Weſaliæ*. an. eod. *Albertus, Poloniæ*. 1598. I ſuppoſe the remaining eight months would furniſh at leaſt as many more. See a Scottiſh Ballad [Rel. of Anc. Poet. v. i. p. 32.], upon one of theſe ſuppoſed murthers. The Editor has very ingeniouſly conjectured that "Mirryland" in ver. 1. is a corruption of "Milan." Perhaps the real occaſion of the Ballad may have been what is ſaid to have happened at *Trent*, in 1475, to a boy called *Simon*. The Cardinal Hadrian, about fifty years after, mentioning the rocks of Trent, adds, "quo Judæi *ob Simonis cædem* ne aſpirare quidem audent. *Præf. ad librum de Serm. Lat.* The change of the name in the Song, from *Simon* to *Hugh*, is natural enough in *this* country, where ſimilar ſtories of *Hugh of Norwich* and *Hugh of Lincoln* had been long current.

§ XXXIII. Next to *the Prioreſſe* CHAUCER himſelf is called upon for his Tale. In the *Prologue* he has dropped a few touches deſcriptive of his own perſon and manner, by which we learn, that he was uſed to look much upon the ground; was of a corpulent habit; and reſerved in his behaviour. His RIME OF SIRE THOPAS was clearly intended to ridicule the "palpable-groſs" fictions of the common Rimers of that age, and ſtill more, perhaps, the meanneſs of their language and verſification. It is full of phraſes taken from *Iſumbras*, *Li beaus deſconus*, and other Romances in the ſame ſtyle, which are ſtill extant. A few of his imitations of them will be pointed out in the Notes.

§ XXXIV. For the more complete reprobation of this ſpecies of Riming, even *the Hoſt*, who is not to be ſuſpected of too refined a taſte, is made to cry out againſt it, and to cut ſhort Sire Thopas in the midſt of his adventures. CHAUCER has nothing to ſay for his *Rime*, but that "*it is the beſt he can*" [ver. 13856.], and readily conſents to tell another Tale; but having juſt laughed ſo freely at the bad poetry of his time, he might think it, perhaps, too invidious to exhibit a ſpecimen of better in his own perſon, and therefore his other Tale is in proſe, a mere tranſlation from, *Le Livre de Melibee et de dame Prudence*," of which ſeveral copies are ſtill preſerved in Ms.[28] It is in truth, as he calls it, [ver. 13868.] "*a moral tale vertuous*," and was probably much eſteemed in its time, but, in this age of levity, I doubt ſome Readers will be apt to regret, that he did not rather give us the remainder of *Sire Thopas*.

§ XXXV. THE PROLOGUE of THE MONKES Tale connects it with *Melibee*. The *Tale* itſelf is certainly formed upon the plan of *Boccace's* great work *de caſibus virorum illuſtrium*, but Chaucer has taken the ſeveral Stories,

[28] Two copies of this work are in the Muſeum, Ms. *Reg.* 19 C. vii. and 19 C. xi. in French proſe. Du Freſnoy, Bibliot. des Romans, v. ii. p. 248. mentions two copies of the ſame work *en vers*, *dans la Bibliotheque Seguier*.

ries, of which it is compoſed, from different authors, who will be particularized in the Notes.

§ XXXVI. After a reaſonable number of melancholy ditties, or Tragedies, as the Monk calls them, he is interrupted by the Knight, and the Hoſt addreſſes himſelf to *the Nonnes Preeſt*, to tell them "*ſwiche thing as may* their *hertes glade*."

THE TALE OF THE NONNES PREEST is cited by Dryden, together with that of *the Wife of Bath*, as of Chaucer's own invention. But that great Poet was not very converſant with the authors of which Chaucer's library ſeems to have been compoſed. *The Wife of Bathes Tale* has been ſhewn above to be taken from Gower, and the Fable of the Cock and the Fox, which makes the ground of *the Nonnes Preeſtes Tale*, is clearly borrowed from a collection of Æſopean and other Fables, by *Marie* a French Poeteſs, whoſe collection of *Lais* has been mentioned before in n. 24. As her Fable is ſhort and well told, and has never been printed, I ſhall inſert it here at length [29], and the more willingly, becauſe it furniſhes a convinc-

ing

[29] From Ms. Harl. 978. f. 76.

D un cok recunte, ki eſtot
Sur un femer, e ſi chantot.
Par de lez li vient un gupilz,
Si l'apela par muz beaus diz.
Sire, fet il, muz te vei bel;
Unc ne vi ſi gent oiſel.
Clere voiz as ſur tute rien,
Fors tun pere, qe jo vi bien;
Unc oiſel meuz ne chanta;
Mes il le fiſt meux, kar il cluna.
Si puis jeo fere, diſt li cocs.
Les eles bat, les oilz ad clos,
Chanter quida plus clerement.
Li gupil ſaut, e ſil prent;
Vers la foreſt od lui s'en va.
Par mi un champ, u il paſſa,

Curent

ing proof, how able Chaucer was to work up an excellent Tale out of very ſmall materials.

§ XXXVII.

Curent apres tut li paſtur;
Li chiens le huent tut entur.
Veit le gupil, ki le cok tient,
Mar le guaina ſi par eus vient.
Va, fet li cocs, ſi lur eſcrie,
Qe ſui tuens, ne me larras mie.
Li gupil volt parler en haut,
E li cocs de ſa buche ſaut.
Sur un haut fuſt s'eſt muntez.
Quant li gupilz s'eſt reguardez,
Mut par ſe tient enfantillé,
Que li cocs l'ad ſi enginné.
De mal talent e de droit ire
La buche comence a maudire,
Ke parole quant devereit taire.
Li cocs reſpunt, ſi dei jeo faire,
Maudire l'oil, ki volt cluiner,
Quant il deit guarder e guaiter,
Que mal ne vient a lur Seignur.
Ceo funt li fol tut li pluſur,
Parolent quant deivent taiſer,
Teiſent quant il deivent parler.

The reſemblance of Chaucer's Tale to this fable is obvious; and it is the more probable that he really copied from Marie, becauſe no ſuch Fable is to be found either in the Greek Æſop, or in any of the Latin compilations (that I have ſeen) which went about in the dark ages under the name of Æſop. Whether it was invented by Marie, or whether ſhe tranſlated it, with the reſt of her fables, from the Anglo-Saxon verſion of Æſop by King Alfred, as ſhe ſays herſelf, I cannot pretend to determine. Though no Anglo-Saxon verſion of Æſop be now as I can find, extant, there may have been one formerly, which may have paſſed, like many other tranſlation into that language, under the name of Alfred; and it may be urged in ſupport of the probability of Marie's poſitive aſſertion, that ſhe appears, from paſſages in her *Lais*, to have had ſome knowledge of Engliſh. I muſt obſerve that the name of the King, whole Engliſh Verſion ſhe profeſſes to follow, is differently ſtated in different Mss. In the beſt Ms. *Harl.* 978. it is plainly *Li reis Alured*. In a later Ms. Veſp. B. xiv. it is *Li reis Henris*. Paſquier [*Recherches*, l. viii. c. i.] calls

him

§ XXXVII. The ſixteen lines, which are printed at the end of the *Nonnes Preeſtes Tale*, might perhaps more properly be conſidered as the beginning of the Prologue to the ſucceeding Tale, if it were certain what Tale was intended to ſucceed. In both Dr. Aſkew's Mss. the laſt of theſe lines is read thus,—

Seide unto *the Nunne* as ye ſhul heer.—

and there are ſix more lines to introduce her Tale; but, as theſe ſix lines are manifeſtly forged for the purpoſe, I have choſen rather to adhere to the other Mss. which acknowledge themſelves defective in this part, and give us *the Nonnes Tale*, as I have done, without any introduction. It is very probable, I think, that Chaucer himſelf had not determined, whether he ſhould connect *the Nonnes Tale* with that of *the Nonnes Preeſt*, or whether he ſhould interpoſe a Tale or two, or perhaps more, between them.

THE TALE OF THE NONNE is almoſt literally tranſlated from the life of St. Cecilia in the *Legenda aurea* of *Jacobus Januenſis*. It is mentioned by Chaucer, as a ſeparate work, in his *Legende of good women* [ver. 426.] under the title of "the life of Seint Cecile," and it ſtill retains evident marks that it was not originally compoſed in the form of a Tale to be *ſpoken* by *the Nonne*[30]. However there can be no doubt that Chaucer meant

him *Li roy Auuert*, and Du Cheſne (as quoted by Menage, v. ROMAN) *Li rois Mires*; but all the copies agree in making Marie declare, that ſhe tranſlated her work "*de l'Anglois en Roman.*" A Latin Æſop, Ms. *Reg.* 15 A. vii. has the ſame ſtory of an Engliſh verſion by order of a *Rex Angliæ Affrus*.

[30] The whole Introduction is in the ſtyle of a perſon *writing*, and not of one *ſpeaking*. If we compare it with the Introduction to the Prioreſſes Tale, the difference will be very ſtriking. See particularly ver. 15546.

Yet praye I you, that *reden* that I *write*—

and in ver. 15530. the Relater, or rather Writer, of the Tale, in all the Mss. except one of middling authority, is called "unworthy *Sone* of Eve." Such little inaccuracies are ſtrong proofs of an unfiniſhed work. See before, p. 75.

meant to incorporate it into this collection of Canterbury Tales, as the *Prologue of the Chanones Yeman* expreſsly refers to it.

§ XXXVIII. The introduction of *the Chanones Yeman* to tell a Tale, at a time when ſo many of the original characters remain to be called upon, appears a little extraordinary. It ſhould ſeem, that ſome ſudden reſentment had determined Chaucer to interrupt the regular courſe of his work, in order to inſert a Satire againſt the Alchemiſts. That their pretended ſcience was much cultivated about this time [31], and produced its uſual evils, may fairly be inferred from the Act, which was paſſed ſoon after, 5 H. IV.

[31] The firſt conſiderable Coinage of Gold in this country was begun by Edward III, in the year 1343, and according to Camden [in his *Remains*, Art. *Money*] "the Alchemiſts did affirm, as an unwritten verity, that the Roſenobles, which were coined ſoon after, were made by projection or multiplication Alchemical of Raymond Lully in the Tower of London." In proof of this, "beſides the tradition of the Rabbies in that faculty," they alledged "the Inſcription; *Jeſus autem tranſiens per medium eorum ibat*;" which they profoundly expounded, *as Jeſus paſſed inviſible and in moſt ſecret manner by the middeſt of Phariſees, ſo that gold was made by inviſible and ſecret art amidſt the ignorant*. But others ſay, "that Text was the only amulet uſed in that credulous warfaring age to eſcape dangers in battles." Thus Camden. I rather believe it was an Amulet, or Charm, principally uſed againſt Thieves; upon the authority of the following paſſage of Sir John Mandevile, c. x. p. 137. "And an half myle fro Nazarethe is the Lepe of oure Lord: for the Jewes ladden him upon an highe roche for to make him lepe down and have ſlayn him: but Jeſu paſſed amonges hem, and lepte upon another roche; and yit ben the ſteppes of his feet ſene in the roche where he allyghte. And therfore ſeyn ſum men whan thei dreden hem of Theſes, on ony weye, or of Enemyes; *Jeſus autem tranſiens per medium illorum ibat:* that is to ſeyne; *Jeſus forſothe paſſynge be the myddes of hem he wente:* in tokene and mynde, that oure Lord paſſed thorghe out the Jewes crueltee, and ſcaped ſafly fro hem; *ſo ſurely mowe men paſſen the perile of Theſes.*" See alſo Catal. Mss. Harl. n. 2966. It muſt be owned, that a Spell againſt Thieves was the moſt ſerviceable, if not the moſt elegant, Inſcription that coud be put upon Gold Coin.

Aſhmole, in his *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 443. has repeated this ridiculous ſtory concerning Lully with additional circumſtances, as if he really believed it; though Lully by the beſt accounts had been dead above twenty years before Edward III began to coin Gold.

The ſame Author (*Mercuriophilus Anglicus*, as he ſtyles himſelf) has inſerted among his *Hermetique*

5 H. IV. c. iv. to make it Felonie *to multiplie gold or ſilver, or to uſe the art of multiplication.*

§ XXXIX. In the PROLOGUE TO THE MANCIPLES TALE, the Pilgrims are ſuppoſed to be arrived at a little town called "Bob up and down, under the blee, in Canterbury way." I cannot find a town of that name in any Map, but it muſt have lain between Boughton, the place laſt mentioned, and Canterbury. The Fable of the Crow, which is the ſubject of THE MANCIPLES TALE, has been related by ſo many authors, from Ovid down to Gower, that it is impoſſible to ſay whom Chaucer principally followed. His ſkill in new dreſſing an old ſtory was never, perhaps, more ſucceſsfully exerted.

§ XL. After the *Tale of the Manciple* the common Editions, ſince 1542 [32], place

Hermetique Myſteries (p. 213.) an old Engliſh Poem, under the title of *Hermes Bird*, which (he ſays in his Notes, p. 467.) was thought to have been written originally by *Raymund Lully*, or at leaſt made Engliſh by Cremer, Abbot of Weſtminſter and Scholar to Lully, p. 465. The truth is, that the Poem is one of *Lydgate's*, and had been printed by Caxton under its true title, *The Chorle and the Bird*; and the fable, on which it is built, is related by *Petrus Alphonſus* (*de Clericali Diſciplinâ*. Ms. *Reg.* 10 B. xii.) who lived above two hundred years before Lully.

[32] In the Edition of 1542, when *the Plowman's Tale* was firſt printed, it was placed *after* the Perſon's Tale. The Editor, whoever he was, had not aſſurance enough, it ſhould ſeem, to thruſt it into the body of the work. In the ſubſequent Editions however, as it had probably been well received by the public, upon account of its violent invectives againſt the Church of Rome, it was advanced to a more honourable ſtation, next to the Manciple's Tale and *before* the Perſon's. The only account which we have of any Ms. of this Tale is from Mr. Speght, who ſays (Note prefixed to *Plowman's Tale*), that he had "ſeene it in written hand in John Stowes Librarie in a booke of ſuch antiquitie, as ſeemed to have been written neare to Chaucer's time." He does not ſay that it was *among the Canterbury Tales*, or that it had *Chaucer's name* to it. We can therefore only judge of it by the internal evidence, and upon that I have no ſcruple to declare my own opinion, that it has not the leaſt reſemblance to Chaucer's manner, either of writing or thinking, in his other

place what is called *the Plowman's Tale*; but, as I cannot underſtand that there is the leaſt ground of evidence, either external or internal, for believing it to be a work of Chaucer's, I have not admitted it into this Edition.

§ XLI. THE PERSONES PROLOGUE therefore is here placed next to *the Manciple's Tale*, agreeably to all the Mss. which are known, and to every Edition before 1542. In this Prologue, which introduces the laſt Tale upon the journey to Canterbury, Chaucer has again pointed out to us the time of the day; but the hour by the clock is very differently repreſented in the Mss. In ſome it is *ten*, in others *two*: in moſt of the beſt Mss. *foure*, and in one *five*. According to the phænomena here mentioned, the Sun being 29° high, and the length of the Shadow to the projecting body as

works. Though he and Boccace have laughed at ſome of the abuſes of religion and the diſorders of Eccleſiaſtical perſons, it is quite incredible that either of them, or even Wicliff himſelf, would have railed at the whole government of the Church, in the ſtyle of this *Plowman's Tale*. If they had been diſpoſed to ſuch an attempt, their times would not have born it; but it is probable, that Chaucer, though he has been preſſed into the ſervice of Proteſtantiſm by ſome zealous writers, was as good a Catholick as men of his underſtanding and rank in life have generally been. The neceſſity of auricular Confeſſion, one of the great ſcandals of Popery, cannot be more ſtrongly inculcated than it is in the following *Tale of the Perſon*.

I will juſt obſerve, that Spenſer ſeems to ſpeak of the Author of *the Plowman's Tale* as a diſtinct perſon from Chaucer, though, in compliance, I ſuppoſe, with the taſte of his age, he puts them both on the ſame footing. In the epilogue to *the Shepherd's Calendar* he ſays to his book,—

Dare not to match thy pipe with *Tityrus* his ſtile,
Nor with the Pilgrim that *the Ploughman* plaid awhile.

I know that Mr. Warton, in his excellent *Obſervations on Spenſer*, v. i. p. 125, ſuppoſes this paſſage to refer to *the Viſions of Pierce Ploughman*; but my reaſon for differing from him is, that the Author of the Viſions never, as I remember, ſpeaks of *himſelf* in the character of *a Ploughman*.

Of *the Pilgrimes Tale*, which has alſo, with as little foundation, been attributed to Chaucer (Speght's Life of Ch.) I ſhall ſpeak in another place. See App. to Pref. A. n. e. p. ix.

as 11 to 6, it was *between four and five*. As by this reckoning there were at leaſt three hours left to ſunſet, one does not well ſee with what propriety the Hoſt admoniſhes the Perſon to *haſte him*, becauſe "*the Sonne wol adoun*," and to be "*fructuous in litel ſpace*;" and indeed *the Perſon*, knowing probably how much time he had good, ſeems to have paid not the leaſt regard to his admonition; for his Tale, if it may be ſo called, is twice as long as any of the others. It is entitled in ſome Mss. "*Tractatus de Pœnitentiâ*, pro Fabulâ, ut dicitur, Rectoris;" and I much ſuſpect that it is a tranſlation of ſome ſuch treatiſe. I can not recommend it as a very entertaining or edifying performance at this day; but the Reader will be pleaſed to remember, in excuſe both of Chaucer and his Editor, that, conſidering the Canterbury Tales as a great picture of life and manners, the piece would not have been complete, if it had not included the Religion of the time.

§ XLII. What is commonly called *the Retractation* at the end of the Perſon's Tale, in ſeveral Mss. makes part of that Tale; and certainly the appellation of "*litel tretiſe*" ſuits better with a ſingle tale, than with ſuch a voluminous work as the whole body of Canterbury Tales. But then on the other hand the recital, which is made in one part of it of ſeveral compoſitions of Chaucer, coud properly be made by nobody but himſelf. I have printed it, as I found it in Ms. Aſk. i. with a few corrections from other Mss. and in the Notes I ſhall give the beſt account that I can of it.

Having thus gone through the ſeveral parts of the Canterbury Tales, which are printed in this Edition, it may not be improper, in the concluſion of this Diſcourſe, to ſtate ſhortly the parts which are wanting to complete the journey *to* Canterbury: of the reſt of Chaucer's intended Plan, as has been ſaid before, we have nothing. Suppoſing therefore the number of the Pilgrims to have been *twenty-nine* (ſee before, § VI.), and allowing the Tale of *the Chanones Yeman* to ſtand in the place of that which we had a right to expect from *the Knightes Yeman*, the Tales wanting will be only thoſe of the *five* City-Mechanics and the Ploughman. It is not likely that the Tales told by ſuch characters would have been among the moſt valua-

ble of the ſet; but they might, and probably would, have ſerved to link together thoſe which at preſent are unconnected; and for that reaſon it is much to be regretted, that they either have been loſt, or, as I rather [33] believe, were never finiſhed by the Author.

[33] When we recollect, that Chaucer's papers muſt in all probability have fallen into the hands of his Son Thomas, who, at the time of his father's death, was of full age, we can hardly doubt that all proper care was taken of them; and if the Tales in queſtion had ever been inſerted among the others, it is ſcarce conceivable that they ſhould all have ſlipt out of all the Copies of this work, of which we have any knowledge or information. Nor is there any ſufficient ground for imagining that ſo many Tales coud have been ſuppreſſed by deſign; though ſuch a ſuppoſition may perhaps be admitted to account for the loſs of ſome ſmaller paſſages. See above, n. 8.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

TO THE

ESSAY, AND INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

ESSAY, &c. p. 50. and 51. n. 61. A learned perſon, whoſe favours I have already acknowledged in the Gloſſ. v. GORE, *cannot acquieſce* in this notion, "that the greateſt part of Chaucer's heroic verſes, when properly written and pronounced, are verſes of eleven ſyllables;" and for a proof of the contrary he refers me particularly to the *Nonnes Preeſtes Tale*, ver. 14970, and the verſes following and preceding. I am ſorry that by an unguarded expreſſion I ſhould have expoſed myſelf to a controverſy, which can only be decided by a careful examination of the final ſyllables of between thirty and forty thouſand lines. It would anſwer my purpoſe as well to ſay "*a great part*" inſtead of "*the greateſt part*;" but in ſupport of my firſt idea I muſt be permitted to obſerve, that I have carefully examined a hundred lines which precede, and as many which follow ver. 14970, and I find, that a clear majority of them, *as they are printed*, end in *e* feminine, and conſequently, according to my hypotheſis, have an eleventh ſyllable. I obſerve too, that ſeveral more *ought to have been printed* as ending with an *e* feminine; but whether the omiſſion of it ſhould be imputed to the defectiveneſs of the Mss. or to the negligence of the collator, I cannot be certain. See the concluding note of the Eſſay, &c. p. 65 and 66.

P. 52. n. 62. Add—It may not be improper here to obſerve further, that a third poem, which is mentioned in the Decameron in the ſame manner with the *Theſeida* and the *Filoſtrato*, was alſo probably one of Boccace's own compoſitions. In the concluſion of the Third Day, it is ſaid, that "Dioneo et la Fiammetta cominciarono a cantare *di Meſſer Guiglielmo et della dama del Vergiu.*" There is an old French Romance, upon this ſubject, as I apprehend, in Ms. Bodl. 2386. It is entitled *Le Romant de la Chaſtelaine du Vergy*, and begins thus:

Une maniere de gens ſont
Qui d'eſtre loyaulx ſemblant font—
Ainſi qu'il avint en Bourgoigne
D'un chevalier preux et hardi
Et de la dame du Vergy.——

The ſtory is the ſame, in the main, with that of the 70th Novel in the Heptameron of the Queen of Navarre, from which, I ſuppoſe, the more modern *Hiſtoire de la Comteſſe du Vergi*, Par. 1722, is taken.

I cannot find that any Italian poem upon this ſubject is now extant; but the unaccountable neglect, with which the poetry of Boccace has been long treated by thoſe very countrymen

trymen of his who idolize his proſe, makes the ſuppoſition, I think, not improbable, that a ſmall piece of this ſort may have been ſuffered to periſh, or even to lurk at this day, unpubliſhed and unnoticed, in ſome Italian library.

Discourse, &c. p. 76. n. 6. l. 9. The lateſt hiſtorical fact.] This paſſage ſhould be compared with the n. on ver. 14709, and corrected accordingly.

P. 93. § xix. Add—I am obliged to Mr. Steevens for pointing out to me a ſtory, which has a great reſemblance, in its principal incidents, to *the Freres tale*. It is quoted by D'Artigny, *Memoires d'Hiſtoire*, &c. T. iii. p. 238. from a collection of Sermons, by an anonymous Dominican, printed about the beginning of the xvith Century, under the title of "*Sermones diſcipuli.*"

THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

CANTERBURY TALES

THE
CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

v. 1—12

WHANNE that April with his ſhoures ſote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in ſwiche licour,
Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eke with his ſote brethe
Enſpired hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge ſonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And ſmale foules maken melodie,
That ſlepen alle night with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,

And palmeres for to ſeken ſtrange ſtrondes,
To ſerve halwes couthe in ſondry londes;
And ſpecially, from every ſhires ende
Of Englelond, to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to ſeke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were ſeke.

Befelle, that, in that ſeſon on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with devoute corage,
At night was come into that hoſtelrie
Wel nine and twenty in a compagnie
Of ſondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felawſhip, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Canterbury wolden ride.
The chambres and the ſtables weren wide,
And wel we weren eſed atte beſte.

And ſhortly, whan the ſonne was gon to reſte,
So hadde I ſpoken with hem everich on,
That I was of hir felawſhip anon,
And made forword erly for to riſe,
To take oure way ther as I you deviſe.

But natheles, while I have time and ſpace,
Or that I forther in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it accordant to reſon,
To tellen you alle the condition

Of eche of hem, ſo as it ſemed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degre;
And eke in what araie that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I firſte beginne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time that he firſte began
To riden out, he loved chevalrie,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteſie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he ridden, no man ferre,
As wel in Criſtendom as in Hetheneſſe,
And ever honoured for his worthineſſe.
At Aliſandre he was whan it was wonne.
Ful often time he hadde the bord begonne
Aboven alle nations in Pruce.
In Lettowe hadde he reyſed and in Ruce,
No criſten man ſo ofte of his degre.
In Gernade at the ſiege eke hadde he be
Of Algeſir, and ridden in Belmarie.
At Leyes was he, and at Satalie,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete ſee
At many a noble armee hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for our faith at Tramiſſene
In liſtes thries, and ay ſlain his fo.

This ilke worthy knight hadde ben alſo
Somtime with the lord of Palatie,
Agen another hethen in Turkie:
And evermore he hadde a ſovereine pris.
And though that he was worthy he was wiſe,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vilanie ne ſayde
In alle his lif, unto no manere wight.
He was a veray parfit gentil knight.
But for to tellen you of his araie,
His hors was good, but he ne was not gaie.
Of fuſtian he wered a gipon,
Alle beſmotred with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome fro his viage,
And wente for to don his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his ſone a yonge SQUIER,
A lover, and a luſty bacheler,
With lockes crull as they were laide in preſſe.
Of twenty yere of age he was I geſſe.
Of his ſtature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of ſtrengthe.
And he hadde be ſomtime in chevachie,
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of ſo litel ſpace,
In hope to ſtonden in his ladies grace.

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Alle ful of freſhe floures, white and rede.
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
He was as freſhe, as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with ſleves long and wide.
Wel coude he ſitte on hors, and fayre ride.
He coude ſonges make, and wel endite,
Juſte and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
So hote he loved, that by nightertale
He ſlep no more than doth the nightingale.
Curteis he was, lowly, and ſerviſable,
And carf before his fader at the table.

A YEMAN hadde he, and ſervantes no mo
At that time, for him luſte to ride ſo;
And he was cladde in cote and hode of grene.
A ſhefe of peacock arwes bright and kene
Under his belt he bare ful thriftily.
Wel coude he dreſſe his takel yemanly:
His arwes drouped not with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bare a mighty bowe.
A not-hed hadde he, with a broune viſage.
Of wood-craft coude he wel alle the uſage.
Upon his arme he bare a gaie bracer,
And by his ſide a ſwerd and a bokeler,
And on that other ſide a gaie daggere,

Harneiſed wel, and ſharpe as point of ſpere:
A Criſtofre on his breſt of ſilver ſhene.
An horne he bare, the baudrik was of grene.
A forſter was he ſothely as I geſſe.

Ther was alſo a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire ſmiling was ful ſimple and coy;
Hire greteſt othe n'as but by Seint Eloy;
And ſhe was cleped madame Eglentine.
Ful wel ſhe ſange the ſervice devine,
Entuned in hire noſe ful ſwetely;
And Frenche ſhe ſpake ful fayre and fetiſly,
After the ſcole of Stratford atte bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete was ſhe wel ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morſel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire ſauce depe.
Wel coude ſhe carie a morſel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire breſt.
In curteſie was ſette ful moche hire leſt.
Hire over lippe wiped ſhe ſo clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing ſene
Of greſe, whan ſhe dronken hadde hire draught.
Ful ſemely after hire mete ſhe raught.
And ſikerly ſhe was of grete diſport,
And ful pleſant, and amiable of port,

And peined hire to contrefeten chere
Of court, and ben eſtatelich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to ſpeken of hire conſcience,
She was ſo charitable and ſo pitous,
She wolde wepe if that ſhe ſaw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of ſmale houndes hadde ſhe, that ſhe fedde
With roſted fleſh, and milk, and waſtel brede.
But ſore wept ſhe if on of hem were dede,
Or if men ſmote it with a yerde ſmert:
And all was conſcience and tendre herte.
Ful ſemely hire wimple ypinched was;
Hire noſe tretis; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful ſmale, and therto ſoft and red;
But ſikerly ſhe hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almoſt a ſpanne brode I trowe;
For hardily ſhe was not undergrowe.
Ful fetiſe was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of ſmale corall aboute hire arm ſhe bare
A pair of bedes, gauded all with grene;
And theron heng a broche of gold ful ſhene,
On whiche was firſt ywriten a crouned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Another NONNE alſo with hire hadde ſhe,
That was hire chapelleine, and PREESTES thre.

A Monk ther was, a fayre for the maiſtrie,
An out-rider, that loved venerie;
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deinte hors hadde he in ſtable:
And whan he rode, men mighte his bridel here
Gingeling in a whiſtling wind as clere,
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.

The reule of ſeint Maure and of ſeint Beneit,
Becauſe that it was olde and ſomdele ſtreit,
This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the trace.
He yave not of the text a pulled hen,
That ſaith, that hunters ben not holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is rekkeles,
Is like to a fiſh that is waterles;
This is to ſay, a monk out of his cloiſtre.
This ilke text held he not worth an oiſtre.
And I ſay his opinion was good.
What ſhulde he ſtudie, and make himſelven wood,
Upon a book in cloiſtre alway to pore,
Or ſwinken with his hondes, and laboure,
As Auſtin bit? how ſhal the world be ſerved?
Let Auſtin have his ſwink to him reſerved.
Therfore he was a prickaſoure a right:
Greihoundes he hadde as ſwift as foul of flight:

Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his luſt, for no coſt wolde he ſpare.
I ſaw his ſleves purfiled at the hond
With gris, and that the fineſt of the lond.
And for to faſten his hood under his chinne,
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne:
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.
His hed was balled, and ſhone as any glas,
And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.
His eyen ſtepe, and rolling in his hed,
That ſtemed as a forneis of a led.
His botes ſouple, his hors in gret eſtat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined goſt.
A fat ſwan loved he beſt of any roſt.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.

A FRERE ther was, a wanton and a mery,
A Limitour, a ful ſolempne man.
In all the ordres foure is non that can
So moche of daliance and fayre langage.
He hadde ymade ful many a mariage
Of yonge wimmen, at his owen coſt.
Until his ordre he was a noble poſt.
Ful wel beloved, and familier was he

With frankeleins over all in his contree,
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun:
For he had power of confeſſion,
As ſaide himſelfe, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful ſwetely herde he confeſſion,
And pleſant was his abſolution.
He was an eſy man to give penance,
Ther as he wiſte to han a good pitance:
For unto a poure ordre for to give
Is ſigne that a man is wel yſhrive.
For if he gave, he dorſte make avant,
He wiſte that a man was repentant.
For many a man ſo hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe although him ſore ſmerte.
Therfore in ſtede of weping and praieres,
Men mote give ſilver to the poure freres.
His tippet was ay farſed ful of knives,
And pinnes, for to given fayre wives.
And certainly he hadde a mery note.
Wel coude he ſinge and plaien on a rote.
Of yeddinges he bare utterly the pris.
His nekke was white as the flour de lis.
Therto he ſtrong was as a champioun,
And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every hoſteler and gay tapſtere,

Better than a lazar or a beggere,
For unto ſwiche a worthy man as he
Accordeth nought, as by his faculte,
To haven with ſike lazars acquaintance.
It is not honeſt, it may not avance,
As for to delen with no ſwiche pouraille,
But all with riche, and ſellers of vitaille.

And over all, ther as profit ſhuld ariſe,
Curteis he was, and lowly of ſerviſe.
Ther n'as no man nowher ſo vertuous.
He was the beſte begger in all his hous:
And gave a certaine ferme for the grant,
Non of his bretheren came in his haunt.
For though a widewe hadde but a ſhoo,
(So pleſant was his *In principio)*
Yet wold he have a ferthing or he went.
His pourchas was wel better than his rent.
And rage he coude as it hadde ben a whelp,
In lovedayes, ther coude he mochel help.
For ther was he nat like a cloiſterere,
With thredbare cope, as is a poure ſcolere,
But he was like a maiſter or a pope.
Of double worſted was his ſemicope,
That round was as a belle out of the preſſe.
Somwhat he liſped for his wantonneſſe,
To make his Engliſh ſwete upon his tonge;

And in his harping, whan that he hadde ſonge,
His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright,
As don the ſterres in a froſty night.
This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee, and highe on hors he ſat,
And on his hed a Flaundriſh bever hat.
His botes clapſed fayre and fetiſly.
His reſons ſpake he ful ſolempnely,
Souning alway the encreſe of his winning.
He wold the ſee were kept for any thing
Betwixen Middelburgh and Orewell.
Wel coud he in eſchanges ſheldes ſelle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit beſette;
Ther wiſte no wight that he was in dette,
So ſtedefaſtly didde he his governance,
With his bargeines, and with his cheviſance.
Forſothe he was a worthy man withalle,
But ſoth to ſayn, I n'ot how men him calle.

A Clerk ther was of Oxenforde alſo,
That unto logike hadde long ygo.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and therto ſoberly.

Ful thredbare was his overeſt courtepy,
For he hadde geten him yet no benefice,
Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was lever han at his beddes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Ariſtotle, and his philoſophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or ſautrie.
But all be that he was a philoſophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
But all that he might of his frendes hente,
On bokes and on lerning he it ſpente,
And beſily gan for the ſoules praie
Of hem, that yave him wherwith to ſcolaie.
Of ſtudie toke he moſte cure and hede.
Not a word ſpake he more than was nede;
And that was ſaid in forme and reverence,
And ſhort and quike, and ful of high ſentence.
Souning in moral vertue was his ſpeche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A Sergeant of the Lawe ware and wiſe,
That often hadde yben at the paruis,
Ther was alſo, ful riche of excellence.
Diſcrete he was, and of gret reverence:
He ſemed ſwiche, his wordes were ſo wiſe,
Juſtice he was ful often in aſſiſe,

By patent, and by pleine commiſſioun;
For his ſcience, and for his high renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many on.
So grete a pourchaſour was nowher non.
All was fee ſimple to him in effect,
His pourchaſing might not ben in ſuſpect.
Nowher ſo beſy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he ſemed beſier than he was.
In termes hadde he cas and domes alle,
That fro the time of king Will. weren falle.
Therto he coude endite, and make a thing,
Ther coude no wight pinche at his writing.
And every ſtatute coude he plaine by rote.
He rode but homely in a medlee cote,
Girt with a ſeint of ſilk, with barres ſmale;
Of his array tell I no lenger tale.

A Frankelein was in this compagnie;
White was his berd, as is the dayeſie.
Of his complexion he was ſanguin.
Wel loved he by the morwe a ſop in win.
To liven in delit was ever his wone,
For he was Epicures owen ſone,
That held opinion, that plein delit
Was verailly felicite parfite.
An houſholder, and that a grete was he;

Seint Julian he was in his contree.
His brede, his ale, was alway after on;
A better envyned man was no wher non.
Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
Of fiſh and fleſh, and that ſo plenteous,
It ſnewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of alle deintees that men coud of thinke,
After the ſondry ſeſons of the yere,
So changed he his mete and his ſoupere.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,
And many a breme, and many a luce in ſtewe.
Wo was his coke, but if his ſauce were
Poinant and ſharpe, and redy all his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stode redy covered alle the longe day.
At ſeſſions ther was he lord and ſire.
Ful often time he was knight of the ſhire.
An anelace and a gipciere all of ſilk,
Heng at his girdel, white as morwe milk.
A ſhereve hadde he ben, and a countour.
Was no wher ſwiche a worthy vavaſour.

An HABERDASHER, and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE, a DEYER, and a TAPISER,
Were alle yclothed in o livere,
Of a ſolempne and grete fraternite.

Ful freſhe and newe hir gere ypiked was.
Hir knives were ychaped not with bras,
But all with ſilver wrought ful clene and wel,
Hir girdeles and hir pouches every del.
Wel ſemed eche of hem a fayre burgeis,
To ſitten in a gild halle, on the deis.
Everich, for the wiſdom that he can,
Was ſhapelich for to ben an alderman.
For catel hadden they ynough and rent,
And eke hir wives wolde it wel aſſent:
And elles certainly they were to blame.
It is ful fayre to ben ycleped madame,
And for to gon to vigiles all before,
And have a mantel reallich ybore.

A Coke they hadden with hem for the nones,
To boile the chikenes and the marie bones,
And poudre marchant, tart and galingale.
Wel coude he knowe a draught of London ale.
He coude roſte, and ſethe, and broile, and frie,
Maken mortrewes, and wel bake a pie.
But gret harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his ſhinne a mormal hadde he.
For blanc manger that made he with the beſt.

A Shipman was ther, woned fer by Weſt:

For ought I wote, he was of Dertemouth.
He rode upon a rouncie, as he couthe,
All in a goune of falding to the knee.
A dagger hanging by a las hadde hee
About his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hote ſommer hadde made his hewe al broun.
And certainly he was a good felaw.
Ful many a draught of win he hadde draw
From Burdeux ward, while that the chapman ſlepe.
Of nice conſcience toke he no kepe.
If that he faught, and hadde the higher hand,
By water he ſent hem home to every land.
But of his craft to reken wel his tides,
His ſtremes and his ſtrandes him beſides,
His herberwe, his mone, and his lodemanage,
Ther was non ſwiche, from Hull unto Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wiſe, I undertake:
With many a tempeſt hadde his berd be ſhake.
He knew wel alle the havens, as they were,
Fro Gotland, to the Cape de finiſtere,
And every creke in Bretagne and in Spaine:
His barge ycleped was the Magdelaine.

With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIKE,
In all this world ne was ther non him like
To ſpeke of phiſike, and of ſurgerie:

For he was grounded in aſtronomie.
He kept his patient a ful gret del
In houres by his magike naturel.
Wel coude he fortunen the aſcendent
Of his images for his patient.

He knew the cauſe of every maladie,
Were it of cold, or hote, or moiſt, or drie,
And wher engendred, and of what humour,
He was a veray parfite practiſour.
The cauſe yknowe, and of his harm the rote,
Anon he gave to the ſike man his bote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To ſend him dragges, and his lettuaries,
For eche of hem made other for to winne:
Hir frendſhip n'as not newe to beginne.
Wel knew he the old Eſculapius,
And Dioſcorides, and eke Rufus;
Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien;
Serapion, Raſis, and Avicen;
Averrois, Damaſcene, and Conſtantin;
Bernard, and Gatiſden, and Gilbertin.
Of his diete meſurable was he,
For it was of no ſuperfluitee,
But of gret nouriſhing, and digeſtible.
His ſtudie was but litel on the Bible.
In ſanguin and in perſe he clad was alle

Lined with taffata, and with ſendalle.
And yet he was but eſy of diſpence:
He kepte that he wan in the peſtilence.
For gold in phiſike is a cordial;
Therfore he loved gold in ſpecial.

A good WIF was ther OF beſide BATHE,
But ſhe was ſom del defe, and that was ſcathe.
Of cloth making ſhe hadde ſwiche an haunt,
She paſſed hem of Ipres, and of Gaunt.
In all the pariſh wif ne was ther non,
That to the offring before hire ſhulde gon,
And if ther did, certain ſo wroth was ſhe,
That ſhe was out of alle charitee.
Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground;
I dorſte ſwere, they weyeden a pound;
That on the Sonday were upon hire hede.
Hire hoſen weren of fine ſcarlet rede,
Ful ſtreite yteyed, and ſhoon ful moiſt and newe.
Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew.
She was a worthy woman all hire live,
Houſbondes at the chirche dore had ſhe had five,
Withouten other compagnie in youthe.
But therof nedeth not to ſpeke as nouthe.
And thries hadde ſhe ben at Jeruſaleme.
She hadde paſſed many a ſtrange ſtreme.

At Rome ſhe hadde ben, and at Boloine,
In Galice at Seint James, and at Coloine.
She coude moche of wandring by the way.
Gat-tothed was ſhe, ſothly for to ſay.
Upon an ambler eſily ſhe ſat,
Ywimpled wel, and on hire hede an hat,
As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe.
A fote-mantel about hire hippes large,
And on hire fete a pair of ſporres ſharpe.
In felawſhip wel coude ſhe laughe and carpe
Of remedies of love ſhe knew parchance,
For of that arte ſhe coude the olde dance.

A good man ther was of religioun,
That was a poure PERSONE of a toun:
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was alſo a lerned man, a clerk,
That Criſtes goſpel trewely wolde preche.
His pariſhens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adverſite ful patient:
And ſwiche he was ypreved often ſithes.
Ful loth were him to curſen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven out of doute,
Unto his poure pariſhens aboute,
Of his offring, and eke of his ſubſtance.

He coude in litel thing have ſuffiſance.
Wide was his pariſh, and houſes fer aſonder,
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,
In ſikeneſſe and in miſchief to viſite
The ferreſt in his pariſh, moche and lite,
Upon his fete, and in his hand a ſtaf.
This noble enſample to his ſhepe he yaf,
That firſt he wrought, and afterward he taught.
Out of the goſpel he the wordes caught,
And this figure he added yet therto,
That if gold ruſte, what ſhuld iren do?
For if a preeſt be foule, on whom we truſt,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruſt:
And ſhame it is, if that a preeſt take kepe,
To ſee a ſhitten ſhepherd, and clene ſhepe:
Wel ought a preeſt enſample for to yeve,
By his cleneneſſe, how his ſhepe ſhulde live.
He ſette not his benefice to hire,
And lette his ſhepe acombred in the mire,
And ran unto London, unto Seint Poules,
To ſeken him a chanterie for ſoules,
Or with a brotherhede to be withold:
But dwelt at home, and kepte wel his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not miſcarie.
He was a ſhepherd, and no mercenarie.
And though he holy were, and vertuous,

He was to ſinful men not diſpitous,
Ne of his ſpeche dangerous ne digne,
But in his teching diſcrete and benigne.
To drawen folk to heven, with faireneſſe,
By good enſample, was his beſineſſe:
But it were any perſone obſtinat,
What ſo he were of highe, or low eſtat,
Him wolde he ſnibben ſharply for the nones.
A better preeſt I trowe that nowher non is.
He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no ſpiced conſcience,
But Criſtes lore, and his apoſtles twelve,
He taught, but firſt he folwed it himſelve.

With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
That hadde ylaid of dong ful many a fother.
A trewe ſwinker, and a good was he,
Living in pees, and parfite charitee.
God loved he beſte with alle his herte
At alle times, were it gain or ſmerte,
And than his neighebour right as himſelve.
He wolde threſh, and therto dike, and delve,
For Criſtes ſake, for every poure wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.
His tithes paied he ful fayre and wel
Both of his propre ſwinke, and his catel.

In a tabard he rode upon a mere.
Ther was alſo a reve, and a millere,
A ſompnour, and a pardoner alſo,
A manciple, and myſelf, ther n'ere no mo.

The MILLER was a ſtout carl for the nones,
Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones;
That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
At wraſtling he wold bere away the ram.
He was ſhort ſhuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
His berd as any ſowe or fox was rede,
And therto brode, as though it were a ſpade.
Upon the cop right of his noſe he hade
A wert, and theron ſtode a tufte of heres,
Rede as the briſtles of a ſowes eres.
His noſe-thirles blacke were and wide.
A ſwerd and bokeler bare he by his ſide.
His mouth as wide was as a forneis.
He was a jangler, and a goliardeis,
And that was moſt of ſinne, and harlotries.
Wel coude he ſtelen corne, and tollen thries.
And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and ſoune,

And therwithall he brought us out of toune.

A gentil MANCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighten take enſemple
For to ben wiſe in bying of vitaille.
For whether that he paide, or toke by taille,
Algate he waited ſo in his achate,
That he was ay before in good eſtate.
Now is not that of God a ful fayre grace,
That ſwiche a lewed mannes wit ſhal pace
The wiſdom of an hepe of lered men?
Of maiſters had he mo than thries ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious:
Of which ther was a doſein in that hous,
Worthy to ben ſtewardes of rent and lond
Of any lord that is in Englelond,
To maken him live by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but if he were wood,
Or live as ſcarſly, as him lift deſire;
And able for to helpen all a ſhire
In any cas that mighte fallen or happe;
And yet this manciple ſette hir aller cappe.

The REVE was a ſlendre colerike man,
His berd was ſhave as neighe as ever he can.
His here was by his eres round yſhorne.

His top was docked like a preeſt beforne.
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Ylike a ſtaff, ther was no calf yſene.
Wel coude he kepe a garner and a binne:
Ther was non auditour coude on him winne.
Wel wiſte he by the drought, and by the rain,
The yelding of his ſeed, and of his grain.
His lordes ſhepe, his nete, and his deirie,
His ſwine, his hors, his ſtore, and his pultrie,
Were holly in this reves governing,
And by his covenant yave he rekening,
Sin that his lord was twenty yere of age;
Ther coude no man bring him in arerage.
Ther n'as baillif, ne herde, ne other hine,
That he ne knew his ſleight and his covine:
They were adradde of him, as of the deth.
His wonning was ful fayre upon an heth,
With grene trees yſhadewed was his place.
He coude better than his lord pourchace.
Ful riche he was yſtored privily.
His lord wel coude he pleſen ſubtilly,
To yeve and lene him of his owen good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good miſtere.
He was a wel good wright, a carpentere.
This reve ſate upon a right good ſtot,

That was all pomelee grey, and highte Scot.
A long ſurcote of perſe upon he hade,
And by his ſide he bare a ruſty blade.
Of Norfolk was this reve, of which I tell,
Beſide a toun, men clepen Baldeſwell.
Tucked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rode the hindereſt of the route.

A Sompnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fire-red cherubinnes face,
For ſauſefleme he was, with eyen narwe.
As hote he was, and likerous as a ſparwe,
With ſcalled browes blake, and pilled berd:
Of his viſage children were ſore aferd.
Ther n'as quikſilver, litarge, ne brimſton,
Boras, ceruſe, ne oile of tartre non,
Ne oinement that wolde clenſe or bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes ſitting on his chekes.
Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,
And for to drinke ſtrong win as rede as blood.
Than wolde he ſpeke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken had the win,
Than wold he ſpeken no word but Latin.
A fewe termes coude he, two or three,
That he had lerned out of ſom decree;

No wonder is, he herd it all the day.
And eke ye knowen wel, how that a jay
Can clepen watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who ſo wolde in other thing him grope,
Than hadde he ſpent all his philoſophie,
Ay, *Queſtio quid juris*, wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kind;
A better felaw ſhulde a man not find.
He wolde ſuffre for a quart of wine,
A good felaw to have his concubine
A twelve month, and excuſe him at the full.
Ful prively a finch eke coude he pull.
And if he found owhere a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have non awe
In ſwiche a cas of the archedekenes curſe;
But if a mannes ſoule were in his purſe;
For in his purſe he ſhulde ypuniſhed be.
Purſe is the archedekens helle, ſaid he.
But wel I wote, he lied right in dede:
Of curſing ought eche gilty man him drede.
For curſe wol ſle right as aſſoiling ſaveth,
And alſo ware him of a *ſignificavit*.
In danger hadde he at his owen giſe
The yonge girles of the diociſe,
And knew hir conſeil, and was of hir rede.
A gerlond hadde he ſette upon his hede,

As gret as it were for an aleſtake:
A bokeler hadde he made him of a cake.

With him ther rode a gentil PARDONERE
Of Rouncevall, his frend and his compere,
That ſtreit was comen from the court of Rome.
Ful loude he ſang, Come hither, love, to me.
This ſompnour bare to him a ſtiff burdoun,
Was never trompe of half ſo gret a ſoun.
This pardoner had here as yelwe as wax,
But ſmoth it heng, as doth a ſtrike of flax:
By unces heng his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his ſhulders overſpradde.
Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and on,
But hode, for jolite, ne wered he non,
For it was truſſed up in his wallet.
Him thought he rode al of the newe get,
Diſhevele, ſauf his cappe, he rode all bare.
Swiche glaring eyen hadde he, as an hare.
A vernicle hadde he ſewed upon his cappe.
His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote.
A vois he hadde, as ſmale as hath a gote.
No berd hadde he, ne never non ſhulde have,
As ſmothe it was as it were newe ſhave;
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.

But of his craft, fro Berwike unto Ware,
Ne was ther ſwiche an other pardonere.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,
Which, as he ſaide, was oure ladies veil:
He ſaide, he hadde a gobbet of the ſeyl
Thatte ſeint Peter had, whan that he went
Upon the ſee, till Jeſu Criſt him hent.
He had a crois of laton ful of ſtones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with theſe relikes, whanne that he fond
A poure perſone dwelling up on lond,
Upon a day he gat him more moneie
Than that the perſone gat in monethes tweie.
And thus with fained flattering and japes,
He made the perſone, and the peple, his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laſt,
He was in chirche a noble eccleſiaſt.
Wel coude he rede a leſſon or a ſtorie,
But alderbeſt he ſang an offertorie:
For wel he wiſte, whan that ſong was ſonge,
He muſte preche, and wel afile his tonge,
To winne ſilver, as he right wel coude:
Therfore he ſang the merier and loude.

Now have I told you ſhortly in a clauſe,
Th'eſtat, th'araie, the nombre, and eke the cauſe

Why that aſſembled was this compagnie
In Southwerk at this gentil hoſtelrie,
That highte the Tabard, faſte by the Belle.
But now is time to you for to telle,
How that we baren us that ilke night,
Whan we were in that hoſtelrie alight.
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And all the remenant of our pilgrimage.

But firſte I praie you of your curteſie,
That ye ne arette it not my vilanie,
Though that I plainly ſpeke in this matere,
To tellen you hir wordes and hir chere;
Ne though I ſpeke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al ſo wel as I,
Who ſo ſhall telle a tale after a man,
He moſte reherſe, as neighe as ever he can,
Everich word, if it be in his charge,
All ſpeke he never ſo rudely and ſo large;
Or elles he moſte tellen his tale untrewe,
Or feinen thinges, or finden wordes newe.
He may not ſpare, although he were his brother.
He moſte as wel ſayn o word, as an other.
Criſt ſpake himſelf ful brode in holy writ,
And wel ye wote no vilanie is it.
Eke Plato ſayeth, who ſo can him rede,
The wordes moſte ben coſin to the dede.

Alſo I praie you to forgive it me,
All have I not ſette folk in hir degree,
Here in this tale, as that they ſhulden ſtonde.
My wit is ſhort, ye may wel underſtonde.

Gret chere made oure hoſte us everich on,
And to the ſouper ſette he us anon:
And ſerved us with vitaille of the beſte.
Strong was the win, and wel to drinke us leſte.
A ſemely man our hoſte was with alle
For to han ben a marſhal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen ſtepe,
A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe:
Bold of his ſpeche, and wiſe and wel ytaught,
And of manhood him lacked righte naught.
Eke therto was he right a mery man,
And after ſouper plaien he began,
And ſpake of mirthe amonges other thinges,
Whan that we hadden made our rekeninges;
And ſaide thus; Now, lordinges, trewely
Ye ben to me welcome right hertily:
For by my trouthe, if that I ſhal not lie,
I ſaw nat this yere ſwiche a compagnie
At ones in this herberwe, as is now.
Fayn wolde I do you mirthe, and I wiſte how.
And of a mirthe I am right now bethought,

To don you eſe, and it ſhall coſte you nought.
Ye gon to Canterbury; God you ſpede,
The blisful martyr quite you your mede;
And wel I wot, as ye gon by the way,
Ye ſhapen you to talken and to play:
For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,
To riden by the way dombe as the ſton:
And therfore wold I maken you diſport,
As I ſaid erſt, and don you ſome comfort.
And if you liketh alle by on aſſent
Now for to ſtonden at my jugement:
And for to werchen as I ſhal you ſay
To-morwe, whan ye riden on the way,
Now by my faders ſoule that is ded,
But ye be mery, ſmiteth of my hed.
Hold up your hondes withouten more ſpeche.
Our conſeil was not longe for to ſeche:
Us thought it was not worth to make it wiſe,
And granted him withouten more aviſe,
And bad him ſay his verdit, as him leſte.
Lordinges, (quod he) now herkeneth for the beſte;
But take it nat, I pray you, in diſdain;
This is the point, to ſpeke it plat and plain,
That eche of you to ſhorten with youre way,
In this viage, ſhal tellen tales tway,
To Canterbury ward, I mene it ſo,

And homeward he ſhall tellen other two,
Of aventures that whilom han befalle.
And which of you that bereth him beſt of alle,
That is to ſayn, that telleth in this cas
Tales of beſt ſentence and moſt ſolas,
Shal have a ſouper at youre aller coſt
Here in this place ſitting by this poſt,
Whan that ye comen agen from Canterbury.
And for to maken you the more mery,
I wol myſelven gladly with you ride,
Right at min owen coſt, and be your gide.
And who that wol my jugement withſay,
Shal pay for alle we ſpenden by the way.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be ſo,
Telle me anon withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly ſhapen me therfore.
This thing was granted, and our othes ſwore
With ful glad herte, and praiden him alſo,
That he wold vouchesauf for to don ſo,
And that he wolde ben our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And ſette a ſouper at a certain pris;
And we wol reuled ben at his deviſe,
In highe and lowe: and thus by on aſſent,
We ben accorded to his jugement.
And therupon the win was fette anon.

We dronken, and to reſte wenten eche on,
Withouten any lenger tarying.
A-morwe whan the day began to ſpring,
Up roſe our hoſte, and was our aller cok,
And gaderd us togeder in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than pas,
Unto the watering of Seint Thomas:
And ther our hoſte began his hors areſt,
And ſaide; lordes, herkeneth if you leſt.
Ye wete your forword, and I it record.
If even-ſong and morwe-ſong accord,
Let ſe now who ſhal telle the firſt tale.
As ever mote I drinken win or ale,
Who ſo is rebel to my jugement,
Shal pay for alle that by the way is ſpent.
Now draweth cutte, or that ye forther twinne.
He which that hath the ſhorteſt ſhal beginne.
Sire knight, (quod he) my maiſter and my lord,
Now draweth cutte, for that is min accord.
Cometh nere, (quod he) my lady prioreſſe,
And ye, ſire clerk, let be your ſhamefaſtneſſe,
Ne ſtudieth nought. lay hand to, every man.
Anon to drawen every wight began,
And ſhortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or ſort, or cas,
The ſothe is this, the cutte felle on the knight,

Of which ful blith and glad was every wight;
And tell he muſt his tale as was reſon,
But forword, and by compoſition,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this good man ſaw that it was ſo,
As he that wiſe was and obedient
To kepe his forword by his free aſſent,
He ſaide; ſithen I ſhal begin this game,
What? welcome be the cutte a goddes name.
Now let us ride, and herkeneth what I ſay.
And with that word we riden forth our way;
And he began with right a mery chere
His tale anon, and ſaide as ye ſhul here.

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

v. 861——880

Whilom, as olde ſtories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theſeus.
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his time ſwiche a conquerour,
That greter was ther non under the ſonne.
Ful many a riche contree had he wonne.
What with his wiſdom and his chevalrie,
He conquerd all the regne of Feminie,
That whilom was ycleped Scythia;
And wedded the freſhe quene Ipolita,
And brought hire home with him to his contree
With mochel glorie and gret ſolempnitee,
And eke hire yonge ſuſter Emelie.
And thus with victorie and with melodie
Let I this worthy duk to Athenes ride,
And all his hoſt, in armes him beſide.

And certes, if it n'ere to long to here,
I wolde have told you fully the manere,
How wonnen was the regne of Feminie,
By Theſeus, and by his chevalrie;

And of the grete bataille for the nones
Betwix Athenes and the Amaſones;
And how aſſeged was Ipolita
The faire hardy quene of Scythia;
And of the feſte, that was at hire wedding,
And of the temple at hire home coming.
But all this thing I moſte as now forbere.
I have, God wot, a large feld to ere;
And weke ben the oxen in my plow.
The remenant of my tale is long ynow.
I wil not letten eke non of this route.
Let every felaw telle his tale aboute,
And let ſe now who ſhal the ſouper winne.
Ther as I left, I wil agen beginne.

This duk, of whom I made mentioun,
Whan he was comen almoſt to the toun,
In all his wele and in his moſte pride,
He was ware, as he caſt his eye aſide,
Wher that ther kneled in the highe wey
A compagnie of ladies, twey and twey,
Eche after other, clad in clothes blake:
But ſwiche a crie and ſwiche a wo they make,
That in this world n'is creature living,
That ever herd ſwiche another waimenting.
And of this crie ne wolde they never ſtenten,
Till they the reines of his bridel henten.

What folk be ye that at min home coming
Perturben ſo my feſte with crying?
Quod Theſeus; have ye ſo grete envie
Of min honour, that thus complaine and crie?
Or who hath you miſboden, or offended?
Do telle me, if that it may be amended;
And why ye be thus clothed alle in blake?
The oldeſt lady of hem all than ſpake,
Whan ſhe had ſwouned, with a dedly chere,
That it was reuthe for to ſeen and here.
She ſayde; lord, to whom fortune hath yeven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to liven,
Nought greveth us your glorie and your honour;
But we beſeke you of mercie and ſocour.
Have mercie on our woe and our diſtreſſe.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentilleſſe,
Upon us wretched wimmen let now falle.
For certes, lord, ther n'is non of us alle,
That ſhe n'hath ben a ducheſſe or a quene;
Now be we caitives, as it is wel ſene:
Thanked be fortune, and hire falſe whele,
That non eſtat enſureth to be wele.
And certes, lord, to abiden your preſence
Here in this temple of the goddeſſe Clemence
We han ben waiting all this fourtenight:
Now helpe us, lord, ſin it lieth in thy might.

I wretched wight, that wepe and waile thus,
Was whilom wif to king Capaneus,
That ſtarfe at Thebes, curſed be that day:
And alle we that ben in this aray,
And maken all this lamentation,
We loſten alle our huſbondes at that toun,
While that the ſege therabouten lay.
And yet now the olde Creon, wala wa!
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquitee,
He for deſpit, and for his tyrannie,
To don the ded bodies a vilanie,
Of alle our lordes, which that ben yſlawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an hepe ydrawe,
And will not ſuffren hem by non aſſent
Neyther to ben yberied, ne ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in deſpite.
And with that word, withouten more reſpite
They fallen groff, and crien pitouſly;
Have on us wretched wimmen ſom mercy,
And let our ſorwe ſinken in thin herte.
This gentil duk doun from his courſer ſterte
With herte pitous, whan he herd hem ſpeke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde all to-breke,
Whan he ſaw hem ſo pitous and ſo mate,
That whilom weren of ſo gret eſtate.

And in his armes he hem all up hente,
And hem comforted in ful good entente,
And ſwore his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde don ſo ferforthly his might
Upon the tyrant Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece ſhulde ſpeke,
How Creon was of Theſeus yſerved,
As he that hath his deth ful wel deſerved.
And right anon withouten more abode
His banner he diſplaide, and forth he rode
To Thebes ward, and all his hoſt beſide:
No nere Athenes n'olde he go ne ride,
Ne take his eſe fully half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay:
And ſent anon Ipolita the quene,
And Emelie hire yonge ſiſter ſhene
Unto the toun of Athenes for to dwell:
And forth he rit; ther n'is no more to tell.
The red ſtatue of Mars with ſpere and targe
So ſhineth in his white banner large,
That all the feldes gliteren up and doun:
And by his banner borne is his penon
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The Minotaure which that he ſlew in Crete.
Thus rit this duk, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoſt of chevalrie the flour,

Til that he came to Thebes, and alight
Fayre in a feld, ther as he thought to fight.
But ſhortly for to ſpeken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
He fought, and ſlew him manly as a knight
In plaine bataille, and put his folk to flight:
And by aſſaut he wan the citee after,
And rent adoun bothe wall and ſparre, and rafter;
And to the ladies he reſtored again
The bodies of hir houſbondes that were ſlain,
To don the obſequies, as was tho the giſe.

But it were all to long for to deviſe
The grete clamour, and the waimenting,
Whiche that the ladies made at the brenning
Of the bodies, and the gret honour,
That Theſeus the noble conquerour
Doth to the ladies, whan they from him wente:
But ſhortly for to telle is min entente.

Whan that this worthy duk, this Theſeus,
Hath Creon ſlaine, and wonnen Thebes thus,
Still in the feld he toke all night his reſte,
And did with all the contree as him leſte.
To ranſake in the tas of bodies dede,
Hem for to ſtripe of harneis and of wede,
The pillours dide hir beſineſſe and cure,
After the bataille and diſcomfiture.

And ſo befell, that in the tas they found,
Thurgh girt with many a grevous blody wound,
Two yonge knightes ligging by and by,
Bothe in on armes, wrought ful richely:
Of whiche two, Arcita highte that on,
And he that other highte Palamon.
Not fully quik, ne fully ded they were,
But by hir cote-armure, and by hir gere,
The heraudes knew hem wel in ſpecial,
As tho that weren of the blod real
Of Thebes, and of ſuſtren two yborne.
Out of the tas the pillours han hem torne,
And han hem caried ſoft unto the tente
Of Theſeus, and he ful ſone hem ſente
To Athenes, for to dwellen in priſon
Perpetuel, he n'olde no raunſon.
And whan this worthy duk had thus ydon,
He toke his hoſt, and home he rit anon
With laurer crouned as a conquerour;
And ther he liveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lif; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in anguiſh and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamon and eke Arcite,
For evermo, ther may no gold hem quite.
Thus paſſeth yere by yere, and day by day,
Till it felle ones in a morwe of May

That Emelie, that fayrer was to ſene
Than is the lilie upon his ſtalke grene,
And freſher than the May with floures newe,
(For with the roſe colour ſtrof hire hewe;
I n'ot which was the finer of hem two)
Er it was day, as ſhe was wont to do,
She was ariſen, and all redy dight.
For May wol have no ſlogardie a-night.
The ſeſon priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his ſlepe to ſterte,
And ſayth, ariſe, and do thin obſervance.
This maketh Emelie han remembrance
To don honour to May, and for to riſe.
Yclothed was ſhe freſhe for to deviſe.
Hire yelwe here was broided in a treſſe,
Behind hire back, a yerde long I geſſe.
And in the gardin at the ſonne upriſt
She walketh up and doun wher as hire liſt.
She gathereth floures, partie white and red,
To make a ſotel gerlond for hire hed,
And as an angel hevenlich ſhe ſong.
The grete tour, that was ſo thikke and ſtrong,
Which of the caſtel was the chef dongeon,
(Wher as theſe knightes weren in priſon,
Of which I tolde you, and tellen ſhal)
Was even joinant to the gardin wall,

Ther as this Emelie had hire playing.
Bright was the ſonne, and clere that morwening,
And Palamon, this woful priſoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler
Was riſen, and romed in a chambre on high,
In which he all the noble citee ſigh,
And eke the gardin, ful of branches grene,
Ther as this freſhe Emelia the ſhene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This forweful priſoner, this Palamon
Goth in his chambre roming to and fro,
And to himſelfe complaining of his wo:
That he was borne, ful oft he ſayd, alas!
And ſo befell, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a window thikke of many a barre
Of yren gret, and ſquare as any ſparre,
He caſt his eyen upon Emelia,
And therwithal he blent and cried, a!
As though he ſtongen were unto the herte.
And with that crie Arcite anon up ſterte,
And ſaide, coſin min, what eyleth thee,
That art ſo pale and dedly for to ſee?
Why crideſt thou? who hath thee don offence?
For goddes love, take all in patience
Our priſon, for it may non other be.
Fortune hath yeven us this adverſite.

Som wikke aſpect or diſpoſition
Of Saturne, by ſom conſtellation,
Hath yeven us this, although we had it ſworn,
So ſtood the heven whan that we were born,
We moſte endure: this is the ſhort and plain.
This Palamon anſwerde, and ſayde again;
Coſin, forſoth of this opinion
Thou haſt a vaine imagination.
This priſon cauſed me not for to crie.
But I was hurt right now thurghout min eye
Into min herte, that wol my bane be.
The fayrneſſe of a lady that I ſe
Yond in the gardin roming to and fro,
Is cauſe of all my crying and my wo.
I n'ot whe'r ſhe be woman or goddeſſe.
But Venus is it, ſothly, as I geſſe.
And therwithall on knees adoun he fill,
And ſayde: Venus, if it be your will
You in this gardin thus to transfigure,
Beforn me ſorweful wretched creature,
Out of this priſon helpe that we may ſcape.
And if ſo be our deſtinee be ſhape
By eterne word to dien in priſon,
Of our lignage have ſom compaſſion,
That is ſo low ybrought by tyrannie.
And with that word Arcita gan eſpie

Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that ſight hire beautee hurt him ſo,
That if that Palamon were wounded ſore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a ſigh he ſayde pitouſly:
The freſhe beautee ſleth me ſodenly
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place.
And but I have hire mercie and hire grace,
That I may ſeen hire at the leſte way,
I n'am but ded; ther n'is no more to ſay.
This Palamon, whan he theſe wordes herd,
Diſpitouſly he loked, and anſwerd:
Whether ſayeſt thou this in erneſt or in play?
Nay, quod Arcite, in erneſt by my fay.
God helpe me ſo, me luſt full yvel pley.
This Palamon gan knit his browes twey.
It were, quod he, to thee no gret honour
For to be falſe, ne for to be traytour
To me, that am thy coſin and thy brother
Yſworne ful depe, and eche of us to other,
That never for to dien in the peine,
Til that the deth departen ſhal us tweine,
Neyther of us in love to hindre other,
Ne in non other cas, my leve brother;
But that thou ſhuldeſt trewely forther me
In every cas, as I ſhuld forther thee.

This was thin oth, and min alſo certain;
I wot it wel, thou darſt it not withſain.
Thus art thou of my conſeil out of doute.
And now thou woldeſt falſly ben aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and ſerve,
And ever ſhal, til that min herte ſterve.
Now certes, falſe Arcite, thou ſhalt not ſo.
I loved hire firſte, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conſeil, and my brother ſworne
To forther me, as I have told beforne.
For which thou art ybounden as a knight
To helpen me, if it lie in thy might,
Or elles art thou falſe, I dare wel ſain.
This Arcita full proudly ſpake again.
Thou ſhalt, quod he, be rather falſe than I.
And thou art falſe, I tell thee utterly.
For *par amour* I loved hire firſt or thou.
What wolt thou ſayn? thou wiſted nat right now
Whether ſhe were a woman or a goddeſſe.
Thin is affection of holineſſe,
And min is love, as to a creature:
For which I tolde thee min aventure
As to my cõſin, and my brother ſworne.
I poſe, that thou lovedeſt hire beforne:
Woſt thou not wel the olde clerkes ſawe,
That who ſhall give a lover any lawe?

Love is a greter lawe by my pan,
Then may be yeven of any erthly man:
And therfore poſitif lawe, and ſwiche decree
Is broken all day for love in eche degree.
A man moſte nedes love maugre his hed.
He may not fleen it, though he ſhuld be ded,
All be ſhe maid, or widewe, or elles wif.
And eke it is not likely all thy lif
To ſtonden in hire grace, no more ſhal I:
For wel thou woſt thyſelven veraily,
That thou and I be damned to priſon
Perpetuel, us gaineth no raunſon.
We ſtrive, as did the houndes for the bone,
They fought all day, and yet hir part was none.
Ther came a kyte, while that they were ſo wrothe,
And bare away the bone betwix hem bothe.
And therfore at the kinges court, my brother,
Eche man for himſelf, ther is non other.
Love if thee luſt; for I love and ay ſhal:
And ſothly, leve brother, this is al.
Here in this priſon moſten we endure,
And everich of us take his aventure.
Gret was the ſtrif, and long betwix hem twey.
If that I hadde leiſer for to ſey:
But to th' effect. It happed on a day,
(To tell it you as ſhortly as I may)

A worthy duk that highte Perithous,
That felaw was to this duk Theſeus
Sin thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Athenes, his felaw to viſite,
And for to play, as he was wont to do,
For in this world he loved no man ſo:
And he loved him as tendrely again.
So wel they loved, as olde bokes ſain,
That whan that on was ded, ſothly to telle,
His felaw wente and ſought him doun in helle:
But of that ſtorie liſt me not to write.

Duk Perithous loved wel Arcite,
And had him knowe at Thebes yere by yere:
And finally at requeſt and praiere
Of Perithous, withouten any raunſon
Duk Theſeus him let out of priſon,
Frely to gon, wher that him liſt over all,
In ſwiche a giſe, as I you tellen ſhall.

This was the forword, plainly for to endite,
Betwixen Theſeus and him Arcite:
That if ſo were, that Arcite were yfound
Ever in his lif, by day or night, o ſtound
In any contree of this Theſeus,
And he were caught, it was accorded thus,
That with a ſwerd he ſhulde leſe his hed;
Ther was non other remedie ne rede.

But taketh his leve, and homeward he him ſpedde;
Let him beware, his nekke lieth to wedde.
How gret a ſorwe ſuffereth now Arcite?
The deth he feleth thurgh his herte ſmite;
He wepeth, waileth, crieth pitouſly;
To ſleen himſelf he waiteth prively.
He ſaid; Alas the day that I was borne!
Now is my priſon werſe than beforne:
Now is me ſhape eternally to dwelle
Not only in purgatorie, but in helle.
Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
For elles had I dwelt with Theſeus
Yfetered in his priſon evermo.
Than had I ben in bliſſe, and not in wo.
Only the ſight of hire, whom that I ſerve,
Though that I never hire grace may deſerve,
Wold have ſufficed right ynough for me.
O dere coſin Palamon, quod he,
Thin is the victorie of this aventure.
Ful blisful in priſon maieſt thou endure:
In priſon? certes nay, but in paradiſe.
Wel hath fortune yturned thee the diſe,
That haſt the ſight of hire, and I th'abſence.
For poſſible is, ſin thou haſt hire preſence,
And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
That by ſom cas, ſin fortune is changeable,

Thou maieſt to thy deſir ſomtime atteine.
But I that am exiled, and barreine
Of alle grace, and in ſo gret deſpaire,
That ther n'is erthe, water, fire, ne aire,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me hele, or don comfort in this,
Wel ought I ſterve in wanhope and diſtreſſe.
Farewel my lif, my luſt, and my gladneſſe.

Alas, why plainen men ſo in commune
Of purveyance of God, or of fortune,
That yeveth hem ful oft in many a giſe
Wel better than they can hemſelf deviſe?
Som man deſireth for to have richeſſe,
That cauſe is of his murdre or gret ſikneſſe.
And ſom man wold out of his priſon fayn,
That in his houſe is of his meinie ſlain.
Infinite harmes ben in this matere.
We wote not what thing that we praien here.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
A dronken man wot wel he hath an hous,
But he ne wot which is the right way thider,
And to a dronken man the way is ſlider.
And certes in this world ſo faren we.

We ſeken faſt after felicite,
But we go wrong ful often trewely.
Thus we may ſayen alle, and namely I,

That wende, and had a gret opinion,
That if I might eſcapen fro priſon
Than had I ben in joye and parfite hele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Sin that I may not ſeen you, Emelie,
I n'am but ded; ther n'is no remedie.

Upon that other ſide Palamon,
Whan that he wiſt Arcita was agon,
Swiche ſorwe he maketh, that the grete tour
Reſouned of his yelling and clamour.
The pure fetters on his ſhinnes grete
Were of his bitter ſalte teres wete.

Alas! quod he, Arcita coſin min,
Of all our ſtrif, God wot, the frute is thin.
Thou walkeſt now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thou yeveſt litel charge.
Thou maiſt, ſith thou haſt wiſdom and manhede,
Aſſemblen all the folk of our kinrede,
And make a werre ſo ſharpe on this contree,
That by ſom aventure, or ſom tretee,
Thou maiſt have hire to lady and to wif,
For whom that I muſt nedes leſe my lif.
For as by way of poſſibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large of priſon free,
And art a lord, gret is thin avantage,
More than is min, that ſterve here in a cage.

For I may wepe and waile, while that I live,
With all the wo that priſon may me yeve,
And eke with peine that love me yeveth alſo,
That doubleth all my tourment and my wo.
Therwith the fire of jalouſie up ſterte
Within his breſt, and hent him by the herte
So woodly, that he like was to behold
The box-tree, or the aſhen ded and cold.
Than ſaid he; O cruel goddes, that governe
This world with binding of your word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamant
Your parlement and your eterne grant,
What is mankind more unto you yhold
Than is the ſhepe, that rouketh in the fold?
For ſlain is man, right as another beeſt,
And dwelleth eke in priſon, and arreſt,
And hath ſikneſſe, and gret adverſite,
And oftentimes gilteles parde.
What governance is in this preſcience,
That gilteles turmenteth innocence?
And yet encreſeth this all my penance,
That man is bounden to his obſervance
For Goddes ſake to leten of his will,
Ther as a beeſt may all his luſt fulfill.
And whan a beeſt is ded, he hath no peine;
But man after his deth mote wepe and pleine,

Though in this world he have care and wo:
Withouten doute it maye ſtonden ſo.
The anſwer of this lete I to divines,
But wel I wote, that in this world gret pine is.
Alas! I ſee a ſerpent or a thefe,
That many a trewe man hath do meſchefe,
Gon at his large, and wher him luſt may turn.
But I moſte ben in priſon thurgh Saturn,
And eke thurgh Juno, jalous and eke wood,
That hath wel neye deſtruied all the blood
Of Thebes, with his waſte walles wide.
And Venus ſleeth me on that other ſide
For jalouſie, and fere of him Arcite.
Now wol I ſtent of Palamon a lite,
And leten him in his priſon ſtill dwelle,
And of Arcita forth I wol you telle.
The ſommer paſſeth, and the nightes long
Encreſen double wiſe the peines ſtrong
Both of the lover, and of the priſoner.
I n'ot which hath the wofuller miſtere.
For ſhortly for to ſay, this Palamon
Perpetuelly is damned to priſon,
In chaines and in fetters to ben ded;
And Arcite is exiled on his hed
For evermore as out of that contree,
Ne never more he ſhal his lady ſee.

You lovers axe I now this queſtion,
Who hath the werſe, Arcite or Palamon?
That on may ſe his lady day by day,
But in priſon moſte he dwellen alway.
That other wher him luſt may ride or go,
But ſen his lady ſhal he never mo.
Now demeth as you liſte, ye that can,
For I wol tell you forth as I began.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful oft a day he ſwelt and ſaid alas,
For ſen his lady ſhal he never mo.
And ſhortly to concluden all his wo,
So mochel ſorwe hadde never creature,
That is or ſhal be, while the world may dure.
His ſlepe, his mete, his drinke is him byraft,
That lene he wex, and drie as is a ſhaft.
His eyen holwe, and griſly to behold,
His hewe falwe, and pale as aſhen cold,
And ſolitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his mone.
And if he herde ſong or inſtrument,
Than wold he wepe, he mighte not be ſtent.
So feble were his ſpirites, and ſo low,
And changed ſo, that no man coude know
His ſpeche ne his vois, though men it herd.
And in his gere, for all the world he ferd

Nought only like the lovers maladie
Of Ereos, but rather ylike manie,
Engendred of humours melancolike,
Beforne his hed in his celle fantaſtike.
And ſhortly turned was all up ſo doun
Both habit and eke diſpoſitioun
Of him, this woful lover dan Arcite.
What ſhuld I all day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured had a yere or two
This cruel torment, and this peine and wo,
At Thebes, in his contree, as I ſaid,
Upon a night in ſlepe as he him laid,
Him thought how that the winged god Mercury
Beforne him ſtood, and bad him to be mery.
His ſlepy yerde in hond he bare upright;
An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
Arraied was this god (as he toke kepe)
As he was whan that Argus toke his ſlepe;
And ſaid him thus: To Athenes ſhalt thou wende;
Ther is thee ſhapen of thy wo an ende.
And with that word Arcite awoke and ſtert.
Now trewely how ſore that ever me ſmert,
Quod he, to Athenes right now wol I fare.
Ne for no drede of deth ſhal I not ſpare
To ſe my lady, that I love and ſerve;
In hire preſence I rekke not to ſterve.

And with that word he caught a gret mirrour,
And ſaw that changed was all his colour,
And ſaw his viſage all in another kind.
And right anon it ran him in his mind,
That ſith his face was ſo disfigured
Of maladie the which he had endured,
He mighte wel, if that he bare him lowe,
Live in Athenes evermore unknowe,
And ſen his lady wel nigh day by day.
And right anon he changed his aray,
And clad him as a poure labourer.
And all alone, ſave only a ſquier,
That knew his privitee and all his cas,
Which was diſguiſed pourely as he was,
To Athenes is he gon the nexte way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffered his ſervice,
To drugge and draw, what ſo men wold deviſe.
And ſhortly of this matere for to ſayn,
He fell in office with a chamberlain,
The which that dwelling was with Emelie.
For he was wiſe, and coude ſone eſpie
Of every ſervant, which that ſerved hire.
Wel coude he hewen wood, and water bere,
For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
And therto he was ſtrong and big of bones

To don that any wight can him deviſe.
A yere or two he was in this ſervice,
Page of the chambre of Emelie the bright;
And Philoſtrate he ſayde that he hight.
But half ſo wel beloved a man as he,
Ne was ther never in court of his degre.
He was ſo gentil of conditioun,
That thurghout all the court was his renoun.
They ſayden that it were a charite
That Theſeus wold enhaunſen his degre,
And putten him in worſhipful ſervice,
Ther as he might his vertues exerciſe.
And thus within a while his name is ſpronge
Both of his dedes, and of his good tonge,
That Theſeus hath taken him of ner
That of his chambre he made him a ſquier,
And gave him gold to mainteine his degre;
And eke men brought him out of his contre
Fro yere to yere ful prively his rent.
But honeſtly and ſleighly he it ſpent,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yere in this wiſe his lif he ladde,
And bare him ſo in pees and eke in werre,
Ther n'as no man that Theſeus hath derre.
And in this bliſſe let I now Arcite,
And ſpeke I wol of Palamon a lite.

In derkeneſſe and horrible and ſtrong priſon
This ſeven yere hath ſitten Palamon,
Forpined, what for love and for diſtreſſe.
Who feleth double ſorwe and hevineſſe
But Palamon? that love diſtraineth ſo,
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo,
And eke therto he is a priſonere
Perpetuell, not only for a yere.

Who coude rime in Engliſh proprely
His martirdom? forſoth it am not I,
Therfore I paſſe as lightly as I may.
It fell that in the ſeventh yere in May
The thridde night, (as olde bokes ſayn,
That all this ſtorie tellen more plain)
Were it by aventure or deſtinee,
(As, whan a thing is ſhapen, it ſhal be,)
That ſone after the midnight, Palamon
By helping of a frend brake his priſon,
And fleeth the cite faſte as he may go,
For he had yeven drinke his gayler ſo
Of a clarre, made of a certain wine,
With Narcotikes and Opie of Thebes fine,
That all the night though that men wold him ſhake,
The gailer ſlept, he mighte not awake.
And thus he fleeth as faſte as ever he may.

The night was ſhort, and faſte by the day,

That nedes coſt he moſte himſelven hide.
And to a grove faſte ther beſide
With dredful foot than ſtalketh Palamon.
For ſhortly this was his opinion,
That in that grove he wold him hide all day,
And in the night than wold he take his way
To Thebes ward, his frendes for to preie
On Theſeus to helpen him werreie.
And ſhortly, eyther he wold leſe his lif,
Or winnen Emelie unto his wif.
This is the effect, and his entente plein.

Now wol I turnen to Arcite agein,
That litel wiſt how neighe was his care,
Til that fortune had brought him in the ſnare.
The beſy larke, the meſſager of day,
Saleweth in hire ſong the morwe gray;
And firy Phebus riſeth up ſo bright,
That all the orient laugheth of the ſight,
And with his ſtremes drieth in the greves
The ſilver dropes, hanging on the leves,
And Arcite, that is in the court real
With Theſeus the ſquier principal,
Is riſen, and loketh on the mery day.
And for to don his obſervance to May,
Remembring on the point of his deſire,
He on his courſer, ſterting as the fire,

Is ridden to the feldes him to pley,
Out of the court, were it a mile or twey.
And to the grove of which that I you told,
By aventure his way he gan to hold,
To maken him a gerlond of the greves,
Were it of woodbind or of hauthorn leves,
And loud he ſong agen the ſonne ſhene.
O Maye, with all thy floures and thy grene,
Right welcome be thou faire freſhe May,
I hope that I ſome grene here getten may.
And from his courſer, with a luſty herte
Into the grove ful haſtily he ſterte,
And in a path he romed up and doun,
Ther as by aventure this Palamon
Was in a buſh, that no man might him ſe,
For ſore afered of his deth was he.
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite.
God wot he wold have trowed it ful lite.
But ſoth is ſaid, gon ſithen are many yeres,
That feld hath eyen, and the wood hath eres.
It is ful faire a man to bere him even,
For al day meten men at unſet ſteven.
Ful litel wote Arcite of his felaw,
That was ſo neigh to herken of his ſaw,
For in the buſh he ſitteth now ful ſtill.
Whan that Arcite had romed all his fill,

And ſongen all the roundel luſtily,
Into a ſtudie he fell ſodenly,
As don theſe lovers in hir queinte geres,
Now in the crop, and now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a well.
Right as the Friday, ſothly for to tell,
Now ſhineth it, and now it raineth faſt,
Right ſo can gery Venus overcaſt
The hertes of hire folk, right as hire day
Is gerfull, right ſo changeth ſhe aray.
Selde is the Friday all the weke ylike.

Whan Arcite hadde yſonge, he gan to ſike,
And ſet him doun withouten any more:
Alas! (quod he) the day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
Wilt thou werreien Thebes the citee?
Alas! ybrought is to confuſion
The blood real of Cadme and Amphion:
Of Cadmus, which that was the firſte man,
That Thebes built, or firſte the toun began,
And of the citee firſte was crouned king.
Of his linage am I, and his ofspring
By veray line, as of the ſtok real:
And now I am ſo caitif and ſo thral,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I ſerve him as his ſquier pourely.

And yet doth Juno me wel more ſhame,
For I dare not beknowe min owen name,
But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philoſtrat, not worth a mite.
Alas! thou fell Mars, alas! thou Juno,
Thus hath your ire our linage all fordo,
Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
That Theſeus martireth in priſon.
And over all this, to ſlen me utterly,
Love hath his firy dart ſo brenningly
Yſtiked thurgh my trewe careful hert,
That ſhapen was my deth erſt than my ſhert.
Ye ſlen me with your eyen, Emelie;
Ye ben the cauſe wherfore that I die.
Of all the remenant of min other care
Ne ſet I not the mountance of a tare,
So that I coud don ought to your pleſance.
And with that word he fell doun in a trance
A longe time; and afterward up ſterte
This Palamon, that thought thurghout his herte
He felt a colde ſwerd ſodenly glide:
For ire he quoke, no lenger wolde he hide.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face ded and pale,
He ſterte him up out of the buſhes thikke,
And ſayde: Falſe Arcite, falſe traitour wicke,

Now art thou hent, that loveſt my lady ſo,
For whom that I have all this peine and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conſeil ſworn,
As I ful oft have told thee herebeforn,
And haſt bejaped here duk Theſeus,
And falſely changed haſt thy name thus;
I wol be ded, or elles thou ſhalt die.
Thou ſhalt not love my lady Emelie,
But I wol love hire only and no mo.
For I am Palamon thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepen have in this place,
But out of priſon am aſtert by grace,
I drede nought, that eyther thou ſhalt die,
Or thou ne ſhalt nat loven Emelie.
Cheſe which thou wolt, for thou ſhalt not aſterte.
This Arcite tho, with ful diſpitous herte,
Whan he him knew, and had his tale herd,
As fers as a leon, pulled out a ſwerd,
And ſayde thus; By God that ſitteth above,
N'ere it that thou art ſike, and wood for love,
And eke that thou no wepen haſt in this place,
Thou ſhuldeſt never out of this grove pace,
That thou ne ſhuldeſt dien of min hond.
For I defie the ſuretee and the bond,
Which that thou ſaiſt that I have made to thee.
What? veray fool, thinke wel that love is free,

And I wol love hire maugre all thy might.
But, for thou art a worthy gentil knight,
And wilneſt to darraine hire by bataille,
Have here my trouth, to-morwe I will not faille,
Withouten weting of any other wight,
That here I wol be founden as a knight,
And bringen harneis right ynough for thee;
And cheſe the beſte, and leve the werſte for me.
And mete and drinke this night wol I bring
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if ſo be that thou my lady win,
And ſle me in this wode, ther I am in,
Thou maiſt wel have thy lady as for me.
  This Palamon anſwerd, I grant it thee.
And thus they ben departed til a-morwe,
Whan eche of hem hath laid his faith to borwe.
  O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felaw have with thee!
Ful ſoth is ſayde, that love ne lordſhip
Wol nat, his thankes, have no felawſhip.
Wel finden that Arcite and Palamon.
  Arcite is ridden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, or it were day light,
Ful prively two harneis hath he dight,
Both ſuffiſant and mete to darreine
The bataille in the feld betwix hem tweine.

And on his hors, alone as he was borne,
He carieth all this harneis him beforne;
And in the grove, at time and place yſette,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.
Tho changen gan the colour of hir face.
Right as the hunter in the regne of Trace
That ſtondeth at a gappe with a ſpere,
Whan hunted is the lion or the bere,
And hereth him come ruſhing in the greves,
And breking bothe the boughes and the leves,
And thinketh, here cometh my mortal enemy,
Withouten faille, he muſt be ded or I;
For eyther I mote ſlen him at the gappe;
Or he mote ſlen me, if that me miſhappe:
So ferden they, in changing of hir hewe,
As fer as eyther of hem other knewe.
Ther n'as no good day, ne no ſaluing.
But ſtreit withouten wordes reherſing,
Everich of hem halpe to armen other,
As frendly, as he were his owen brother.
And after that, with ſharpe ſperes ſtrong
They foineden eche at other wonder long.
Thou mighteſt wenen, that this Palamon
In his fighting were as a wood leon,
And as a cruel tigre was Arcite:
As wilde bores gan they togeder ſmite,

That frothen white as fome for ire wood.
Up to the ancle foughte they in hir blood.
And in this wiſe I let hem fighting dwelle,
And forth I wol of Theſeus you telle.
The deſtinee, miniſtre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveiance, that God hath ſen beforne;
So ſtrong it is, that though the world had ſworne
The contrary of a thing by ya or nay,
Yet ſomtime it ſhall fallen on a day
That falleth nat efte in a thouſand yere.
For certainly our appetites here,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
All is this ruled by the ſight above.
This mene I now by mighty Theſeus,
That for to hunten is ſo deſirous,
And namely at the grete hart in May,
That in his bed ther daweth him no day,
That he n'is clad, and redy for to ride
With hunte and horne, and houndes him beſide.
For in his hunting hath he ſwiche delite,
That it is all his joye and appetite
To ben himſelf the grete hartes bane,
For after Mars he ſerveth now Diane.
Clere was the day, as I have told or this,
And Theſeus, with alle joye and blis,

With his Ipolita, the fayre quene,
And Emelie, yclothed all in grene,
On hunting ben they ridden really.
And to the grove, that ſtood ther faſte by,
In which ther was an hart as men him told,
Duk Theſeus the ſtreite way hath hold.
And to the launde he rideth him ful right,
Ther was the hart ywont to have his flight,
And over a brooke, and ſo forth on his wey.
This duk wol have a cours at him or twey
With houndes, ſwiche as him luſt to commaunde.
And when this duk was comen to the launde,
Under the ſonne he loked, and anon
He was ware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bolles two.
The brighte ſwerdes wenten to and fro
So hidouſly, that with the leſte ſtroke
It ſemed that it wolde felle an oke.
But what they weren, nothing he ne wote.
This duk his courſer with his ſporres ſmote,
And at a ſtert he was betwix hem two,
And pulled out a ſwerd and cried, ho!
No more, up peine of leſing of your hed.
By mighty Mars, he ſhal anon be ded,
That ſmiteth any ſtroke, that I may ſen.
But telleth me what miſtere men ye ben,

That ben ſo hardy for to fighten here
Withouten any juge other officere,
As though it were in liſtes really.
  This Palamon anſwered haſtily,
And ſaide: Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deth deſerved bothe two.
Two woful wretches ben we, two caitives,
That ben accombred of our owen lives,
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neyther mercie ne refuge.
And ſle me firſt, for ſeinte charitee.
But ſle my felaw eke as wel as me.
Or ſle him firſt; for, though thou know it lite,
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is baniſhed on his hed,
For which he hath deſerved to be ded.
For this is he that came unto thy gate
And ſayde, that he highte Philoſtrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yere,
And thou haſt maked him thy chief ſquiere,
And this is he, that loveth Emelie.
  For ſith the day is come that I ſhal die
I make plainly my confeſſion,
That I am thilke woful Palamon,
That hath thy priſon broken wilfully.
I am thy mortal fo, and it am I

That loveth ſo hot Emelie the bright,
That I wold dien preſent in hire ſight.
Therfore I axe deth and my jewiſe.
But ſle my felaw in the ſame wiſe,
For both we have deſerved to be ſlain.
This worthy duk anſwerd anon again,
And ſayd, This is a ſhort concluſion.
Your owen mouth, by your confeſſion
Hath damned you, and I wol it recorde.
It nedeth not to peine you with the corde.
Ye ſhul be ded by mighty Mars the rede.
The quene anon for veray womanhede
Gan for to wepe, and ſo did Emelie,
And all the ladies in the compagnie.
Gret pite was it, as it thought hem alle,
That ever ſwiche a chance ſhulde befalle.
For gentil men they were of gret eſtat,
And nothing but for love was this debat.
And ſawe hir blody woundes wide and ſore;
And alle criden bothe leſſe and more,
Have mercie, Lord, upon us wimmen alle.
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
And wold have kiſt his feet ther as he ſtood,
Till at the laſt, aſlaked was his mood;
(For pitee renneth ſone in gentil herte)
And though he firſt for ire quoke and ſterte,

He hath conſidered ſhortly in a clauſe
The treſpas of hem both, and eke the cauſe:
And although that his ire hir gilt accuſed,
Yet in his reſon he hem both excuſed;
As thus; he thoughte wel that every man
Wol helpe himſelf in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himſelf out of priſon.
And eke his herte had compaſſion
Of wimmen, for they wepten ever in on:
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And ſoft unto himſelf he ſayed: fie
Upon a lord that wol have no mercie,
But be a leon both in word and dede,
To hem that ben in repentance and drede,
As wel as to a proud diſpitous man,
That wol mainteinen that he firſt began.
That lord hath litel of diſcretion,
That in ſwiche cas can no diviſion:
But weigheth pride and humbleſſe after on.
And ſhortly, whan his ire is thus agon,
He gan to loken up with eyen light,
And ſpake theſe ſame wordes all on hight.
The god of love, a! *benedicite*,
How mighty and how grete a lord is he?
Again his might ther gainen non obſtacles,
He may be cleped a God for his miracles.

For he can maken at his owen giſe
Of everich herte, as that him liſt deviſe.
Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
That quitely weren out of my priſon,
And might have lived in Thebes really,
And weten I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my might alſo,
And yet hath love, maugre hir eyen two,
Ybrought hem hither bothe for to die.
Now loketh, is not this an heigh folie?
Who maye ben a fool, but if he love?
Behold for Goddes ſake that ſitteth above,
Se how they blede! be they not wel araied?
Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, hem paied
Hir wages, and hir fees for hir ſervice.
And yet they wenen for to be ful wiſe,
That ſerven love, for ought that may befalle.
And yet is this the beſte game of alle,
That ſhe, for whom they have this jolite,
Con hem therfore as mochel thank as me.
She wot no more of alle this hote fare
By God, than wot a cuckow or an hare.
But all mote ben aſſaied hote or cold;
A man mote ben a fool other yonge or old;
I wot it by myſelf ful yore agon:
For in my time a ſervant was I on.

And therfore ſith I know of loves peine,
And wot how ſore it can a man deſtreine,
As he that oft hath ben caught in his las,
I you foryeve all holly this treſpas,
At requeſt of the quene that kneleth here,
And eke of Emelie, my ſuſter dere.
And ye ſhul bothe anon unto me ſwere,
That never mo ye ſhul my contree dere,
Ne maken werre upon me night ne day,
But ben my frendes in alle that ye may.
I you foryeve this treſpas every del.
And they him ſware his axing fayr and wel,
And him of lordſhip and of mercie praid,
And he hem granted grace, and thus he ſaid:
To ſpeke of real linage and richeſſe,
Though that ſhe were a quene or a princeſſe,
Eche of you bothe is worthy douteles
To wedden whan time is, but natheles
I ſpeke as for my ſuſter Emelie,
For whom ye have this ſtrif and jalouſie,
Ye wot yourſelf, ſhe may not wedden two
At ones, though ye fighten evermo:
But on of you, al be him loth or lefe,
He mot gon pipen in an ivy lefe:
This is to ſay, ſhe may not have you bothe,
Al be ye never ſo jalous, ne ſo wrothe.

And forthy I you put in this degree,
That eche of you ſhall have his deſtinee,
As him is ſhape, and herkneth in what wiſe;
Lo here your ende of that I ſhal deviſe.
My will is this for plat concluſion
Withouten any replication,
If that you liketh, take it for the beſte,
That everich of you ſhal gon wher him leſte
Freely withouten raunſon or dangere;
And this day fifty wekes, ferre ne nere,
Everich of you ſhal bring an hundred knightes,
Armed for liſtes up at alle rightes
Alle redy to darrein hire by bataille.
And this behete I you withouten faille
Upon my trouth, and as I am a knight,
That whether of you bothe hath that might,
This is to ſayn, that whether he or thou
May with his hundred, as I ſpake of now,
Sle his contrary, or out of liſtes drive,
Him ſhall I yeven Emelie to wive,
To whom that fortune yeveth ſo fayr a grace.
The liſtes ſhal I maken in this place,
And God ſo wiſly on my ſoule rewe,
As I ſhal even juge ben, and trewe.
Ye ſhal non other ende with me maken
That on of you ne ſhal be ded or taken.

And if you thinketh this is wel yſaid,
Saith your avis, and holdeth you apaid.
This is your ende, and your concluſion.
Who loketh lightly now but Palamon?
Who ſpringeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who coud it tell, or who coud it endite,
The joye that is maked in the place
Whan Theſeus hath don ſo fayre a grace?
But doun on knees went every manere wight,
And thanked him with all hir hertes might,
And namely theſe Thebanes often ſith.
And thus with good hope and with herte blith
They taken hir leve, and homeward gan they ride
To Thebes, with his olde walles wide.
I trowe men wolde deme it negligence,
If I foryete to tellen the diſpence
Of Theſeus, that goth ſo beſily
To maken up the liſtes really,
That ſwiche a noble theatre as it was,
I dare wel ſayn, in all this world ther n'as.
The circuite a mile was aboute,
Walled of ſtone, and diched all withoute.
Round was the ſhape, in manere of a compas
Ful of degrees, the hight of ſixty pas,
That whan a man was ſet on o degree
He letted not his felaw for to ſee.

Eſtward ther ſtood a gate of marbel white,
Weſtward right ſwiche another in th' oppoſite.
And ſhortly to concluden, ſwiche a place
Was never in erthe, in ſo litel a ſpace,
For in the lond ther n'as no craftes man,
That geometrie, or arſmetrike can,
Ne portreiour, ne kerver of images,
That Theſeus ne yaf him mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and deviſe.
And for to don his rite and ſacrifice,
He eſtward hath upon the gate above,
In worſhip of Venus goddeſſe of love,
Don make an auter and an oratorie;
And weſtward in the minde and in memorie
Of Mars he maked hath right ſwiche another,
That coſte largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a touret on the wall,
Of alabaſtre white and red corall
An oratorie riche for to ſee,
In worſhip of Diane of chaſtitee,
Hath Theſeus don wrought in noble wiſe.
But yet had I foryetten to deviſe
The noble kerving, and the portreitures,
The ſhape, the contenance of the figures
That weren in theſe oratories three.
Firſt in the temple of Venus maiſt thou ſee

Wrought on the wall, ful pitous to beholde,
The broken ſlepes, and the ſikes colde,
The ſacred teres, and the waimentinges,
The firy ſtrokes of the deſiringes,
That loves ſervants in this lif enduren;
The othes, that hir covenants aſſuren.
Pleſance and hope, deſire, foolhardineſſe,
Beaute and youthe, baudrie and richeſſe,
Charmes and force, leſinges and flaterie,
Diſpence, beſineſſe, and jalouſie,
That wered of yelwe goldes a gerlond,
And hadde a cuckow ſitting or hire hond,
Feſtes, inſtruments, and caroles and dances,
Luſt and array, and all the circumſtances
Of love, which that I reken and reken ſhall,
By ordre weren peinted on the wall,
And mo than I can make of mention.
For ſothly all the mount of Citheron,
Ther Venus hath hire principal dwelling,
Was ſhewed on the wall in purtreying,
With all the gardin, and the luſtineſſe.
Nought was foryetten the porter idelneſſe,
Ne Narciſſus the fayre of yore agon,
Ne yet the folie of king Salomon,
Ne yet the grete ſtrengthe of Hercules,
Th' enchantment of Medea and Circes,

Ne of Turnus the hardy fiers corage,
The riche Creſus caitif in ſervage.
Thus may ye ſeen, that wiſdom ne richeſſe,
Beaute ne ſleighte, ſtrengthe ne hardineſſe,
Ne may with Venus holden champartie,
For as hire liſte the world may ſhe gie.
Lo, all theſe folk ſo caught were in hire las
Til they for wo ful often ſaid alas.
Sufficeth here enſamples on or two,
And yet I coude reken a thouſand mo.
The ſtatue of Venus glorious for to ſee
Was naked fleting in the large ſee,
And fro the navel doun all covered was
With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.
A citole in hire right hand hadde ſhe,
And on hire hed, ful ſemely for to ſee,
A roſe gerlond freſh, and wel ſmelling,
Above hire hed hire doves fleckering.
Before hire ſtood hire ſone Cupido,
Upon his ſhoulders winges had he two;
And blind he was, as it is often ſene;
A bow he bare and arwes bright and kene.
Why ſhulde I not as wel eke tell you all
The purtreiture, that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the rede?
All peinted was the wall in length and brede

Like to the eſtres of the griſly place,
That highte the gret temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilke colde and froſty region,
Ther as Mars hath his ſovereine manſion.
  Firſt on the wall was peinted a foreſt,
In which ther wonneth neyther man ne beſt,
With knotty knarry barrein trees old
Of ſtubbes ſharpe and hidous to behold;
In which ther ran a romble and a ſwough,
As though a ſtorme ſhuld breſten every bough:
And dounward from an hill under a bent,
Ther ſtood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burned ſtele, of which th' entree
Was longe and ſtreite, and gaſtly for to ſee.
And therout came a rage and ſwiche a viſe,
That it made all the gates for to riſe.
The northern light in at the dore ſhone,
For window on the wall ne was ther none,
Thurgh which men mighten any light diſcerne.
The dore was all of athamant eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With yren tough, and for to make it ſtrong,
Every piler the temple to ſuſtene
Was tonne-gret, of yren bright and ſhene.
  Ther ſaw I firſt the derke imagining
Of felonie, and alle the compaſſing;

The cruel ire, red as any glede,
The pikepurſe, and eke the pale drede;
The ſmiler with the knif under the cloke,
The ſhepen brenning with the blake ſmoke;
The treſon of the mordring in the bedde,
The open werre, with woundes all bebledde;
Conteke with blody knif, and ſharp manace,
All full of chirking was that ſory place.
The ſleer of himſelf yet ſaw I there,
His herte-blood hath bathed all his here:
The naile ydriven in the ſhode on hight,
The colde deth, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple ſate miſchance,
With diſcomfort and ſory contenance.
Yet ſaw I woodneſſe laughing in his rage,
Armed complaint, outhees, and fiers outrage;
The carraine in the buſh, with throte ycorven,
A thouſand ſlain, and not of qualme yſtorven;
The tirant, with the prey by force yraft;
The toun deſtroied, ther was nothing laft.
Yet ſaw I brent the ſhippes hoppeſteres,
The hunte yſtrangled with the wilde beres:
The ſow freting the child right in the cradel;
The coke yſcalled, for all his long ladel.
Nought was foryete by th' infortune of Marte
The carter overridden with his carte;

Under the wheel ful low he lay adoun.
Ther were alſo of Martes diviſion,
Th' armerer, and the bowyer, and the ſmith,
That forgeth ſharpe ſwerdes on his ſtith.
And all above depeinted in a tour
Saw I conqueſt, ſitting in gret honour,
With thilke ſharpe ſwerd over his hed
Yhanging by a ſubtil twined thred.
Depeinted was the ſlaughter of Julius,
Of gret Nero, and of Antonius:
All be that thilke time they were unborne,
Yet was hir deth depeinted therbeforne,
By manacing of Mars, right by figure,
So was it ſhewed in that purtreiture
As is depeinted in the cercles above,
Who ſhal be ſlaine or elles ded for love.
Sufficeth on enſample in ſtories olde,
I may not reken hem alle, though I wolde.
The ſtatue of Mars upon a carte ſtood
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood,
And over his hed ther ſhinen two figures
Of ſterres, that ben cleped in ſcriptures,
That on Puella, that other Rubeus.
This god of armes was araied thus:
A wolf ther ſtood beforne him at his fete
With eyen red, and of a man he ete:

With ſubtil penſil peinted was this ſtorie,
In redouting of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Diane the chaſte
As ſhortly as I can I wol me haſte,
To tellen you of the deſcriptioun,
Depeinted by the walles up and doun,
Of hunting and of ſhamefaſt chaſtitee.
Ther ſaw I how woful Caliſtope,
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a woman til a bere,
And after was ſhe made the lodeſterre:
Thus was it peinted, I can ſay no ferre;
Hire ſone is eke a ſterre as men may ſee.
Ther ſaw I Dane yturned til a tree,
I mene not hire the goddeſſe Diane,
But Peneus daughter, which that highte Dane.
Ther ſaw I Atteon an hart ymaked,
For vengeance that he ſaw Diane all naked:
I ſaw how that his houndes have him caught,
And freten him, for that they knew him naught.
Yet peinted was a litel forthermore,
How Athalante hunted the wilde bore,
And Meleagre, and many another mo,
For which Diane wroughte hem care and wo.
Ther ſaw I many another wonder ſtorie,
The which me liſte not drawen to memorie.

This goddeſſe on an hart ful heye ſete,
With ſmale houndes all aboute hire fete,
And undernethe hire feet ſhe hadde a mone,
Wexing it was, and ſhulde wanen ſone.
In gaudy grene hire ſtatue clothed was,
With bow in hond, and arwes in a cas.
Hire eyen caſte ſhe ful low adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A woman travailling was hire beforne,
But for hire childe ſo longe was unborne
Ful pitouſly Lucina gan ſhe call,
And ſayed; helpe, for thou mayſt beſte of all.
Wel coude he peinten lifly that it wrought,
With many a florein he the hewes bought.
Now ben theſe liſtes made, and Theſeus
That at his grete coſt arraied thus
The temples, and the theatre everidel,
Whan it was don, him liked wonder wel.
But ſtint I wol of Theſeus a lite,
And ſpeke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of hir returning,
That everich ſhuld an hundred knightes bring,
The bataille to darreine, as I you told;
And til Athenes, hir covenant for to hold,
Hath everich of hem brought an hundred knightes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.

And ſikerly ther trowed many a man,
That never, ſithen that the world began,
As for to ſpeke of knighthood of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked ſee and lond,
N'as, of ſo fewe, ſo noble a compagnie.
For every wight that loved chevalrie,
And wold, his thankes, han a paſſant name,
Hath praied, that he might ben of that game,
And wel was him, that therto choſen was.
For if ther fell to-morwe ſwiche a cas,
Ye knowen wel, that every luſty knight,
That loveth *par amour*, and hath his might,
Were it in Englelond, or elleſwher,
They wold, hir thankes, willen to be ther.
To fight for a lady, a! *benedicite*,
It were a luſty ſighte for to ſe.
And right ſo ferden they with Palamon.
With him ther wenten knightes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an habergeon,
And in a breſt plate, and in a gipon;
And ſom wol have a pair of plates large;
And ſom wol have a Pruce ſheld, or a targe;
Som wol ben armed on his legges wele,
And have an axe, and ſom a mace of ſtele.
Ther n'is no newe guiſe, that it n'as old.
Armed they weren, as I have you told,

Everich after his opinion.

Ther maiſt thou ſe coming with Palamon
Licurge himſelf, the grete king of Trace:
Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his hed
They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
And like a griffon loked he about,
With kemped heres on his browes ſtout;
His limmes gret, his braunes hard and ſtronge,
His ſhouldres brode, his armes round and longe.
And as the guiſe was in his contree,
Ful highe upon a char of gold ſtood he,
With foure white bolles in the trais.
Inſtede of cote-armure on his harnais,
With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
He hadde a beres ſkin, cole-blake for old.
His longe here was kempt behind his bak,
As any ravenes fether it ſhone for blake.
A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,
Upon his hed ſate ful of ſtones bright,
Of fine rubins and of diamants.
About his char ther wenten white alauns,
Twenty and mo, as gret as any ſtere,
To hunten at the leon or the dere,
And folwed him, with moſel faſt ybound,
Colered with gold, and torettes filed round.

An hundred lordes had he in his route
Armed full wel, with hertes ſterne and ſtoute.
With Arcita, in ſtories as men find,
The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,
Upon a ſtede bay, trapped in ſtele,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,
Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles, white, and round and grete.
His ſadel was of brent gold new ybete;
A mantelet upon his ſhouldres hanging
Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire ſparkling.
His criſpe here like ringes was yronne,
And that was yelwe, and glitered as the ſonne.
His noſe was high, his eyen bright citrin,
His lippes round, his colour was ſanguin,
A fewe fraknes in his face yſpreint,
Betwixen yelwe and blakc ſomdel ymeint,
And as a leon he his loking caſte.
Of five and twenty yere his age I caſte.
His berd was wel begonnen for to ſpring;
His vois was as a trompe thondering.
Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
A gerlond freſhe and luſty for to ſene.
Upon his hond he bare for his deduit
An egle tame, as any lily whit.

An hundred lordes had he with him there,
All armed ſave hir hedes in all hir gere,
Ful richely in alle manere thinges.
For truſteth wel, that erles, dukes, kinges
Were gathered in this noble compagnie,
For love, and for encreſe of chevalrie.
About this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.

And in this wiſe, theſe lordes all and ſome
Ben on the Sonday to the citee come
Abouten prime, and in the toun alight.

This Theſeus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he had brought hem into his citee,
And inned hem, everich at his degree,
He feſteth hem, and doth ſo gret labour
To eſen hem, and don hem all honour,
That yet men wenen that no mannes wit
Of non eſtat ne coud amenden it.
The minſtralcie, the ſervice at the feſte,
The grete yeftes to the moſt and leſte,
The riche array of Theſeus paleis,
Ne who ſate firſt ne laſt upon the deis,
What ladies fayreſt ben or beſt dancing,
Or which of hem can carole beſt or ſing,
Ne who moſt felingly ſpeketh of love;
What haukes ſitten on the perche above,

What houndes liggen on the floor adoun,
Of all this now make I no mentioun;
But of the effect; that thinketh me the beſte;
Now cometh the point, and herkeneth if you leſte.

The Sonday night, or day began to ſpring,
Whan Palamon the larke herde ſing,
Although it n'ere not day by houres two,
Yet ſang the larke, and Palamon right tho
With holy herte, and with an high corage
He roſe, to wenden on his pilgrimage
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
I mene Venus, honourable and digne.
And in hire houre, he walketh forth a pas
Unto the liſtes, ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and with humble chere
And herte ſore, he ſayde as ye ſhul here.

Fayreſt of fayre, o lady min Venus,
Daughter to Jove, and ſpouſe of Vulcanus,
Thou glader of the mount of Citheron,
For thilke love thou haddeſt to Adon
Have pitee on my bitter teres ſmert,
And take myn humble praier at thin herte

Alas! I ne have no langage to tell
The effecte, ne the torment of min hell;
Min herte may min harmes not bewrey;
I am ſo confuſe, that I cannot ſay.

But mercy, lady bright, that knoweſt wele
My thought, and ſeeſt what harmes that I fele,
Conſider all this, and rue upon my ſore,
As wiſly as I ſhall for evermore,
Emforth my might, thy trewe ſervant be,
And holden werre alway with chaſtite:
That make I min avow, ſo ye me helpe.
I kepe nought of armes for to yelpe,
Ne axe I nat to-morwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne vaine glorie
Of pris of armes, blowen up and doun,
But I wold have fully poſſeſſioun
Of Emelie, and die in hire ſerviſe;
Find thou the manere how, and in what wiſe.
I rekke not, but it may better be,
To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in min armes.
For though ſo be that Mars is god of armes,
Your vertue is ſo grete in heven above,
That if you liſte, I ſhal wel have my love.
Thy temple wol I worſhip evermo,
And on thin auter, wher I ride or go,
I wol don ſacrifice, and fires bete.
And if ye wol not ſo, my lady ſwete,
Than pray I you, to-morwe with a ſpere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.

Than rekke I not, whan I have loſt my lif,
Though that Arcita win hire to his wif.
This is the effecte and ende of my praiere;
Yeve me my love, thou blisful lady dere.

Whan the oriſon was don of Palamon,
His ſacrifice he did, and that anon,
Full pitouſly, with alle circumſtances,
All tell I not as now his obſervances.
But at the laſt the ſtatue of Venus ſhoke,
And made a ſigne, wherby that he toke,
That his praiere accepted was that day.
For though the ſigne ſhewed a delay,
Yet wiſt he wel that granted was his bone;
And with glad herte he went him home ful ſone.

The thridde houre inequal that Palamon
Began to Venus temple for to gon,
Up roſe the ſonne, and up roſe Emelie,
And to the temple of Diane gan hie.
Hire maydens, that ſhe thider with hire ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fire they hadde,
Th'encenſe, the clothes, and the remenant all,
That to the ſacrifice longen ſhall.
The hornes ful of mede, as was the giſe,
Ther lakked nought to don hire ſacrifiſe.
Smoking the temple, ful of clothes fayre,
This Emelie with herte debonaire

Hire body wesſhe with water of a well.
But how ſhe did hire rite I dare not tell;
But it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game to heren all;
To him that meneth wel it n'ere no charge:
But it is good a man to ben at large.
Hire bright here kembed was, untreſſed all.
A coroune of a grene oke cerial
Upon hire hed was ſet ful fayre and mete.
Two fires on the auter gan ſhe bete,
And did hire thinges, as men may behold
In Stace of Thebes, and theſe bokes old.
Whan kindled was the fire, with pitous chere
Unto Diane ſhe ſpake, as ye may here.
O chaſte goddeſſe of the wodes grene,
To whom both heven and erthe and ſee is ſene,
Quene of the regne of Pluto, derke and lowe,
Goddeſſe of maydens, that min herte haſt knowe
Ful many a yere, and woſt what I deſire,
As kepe me fro thy vengeance and thin ire,
That Atteon aboughte cruelly:
Chaſte goddeſſe, wel woteſt thou that I
Deſire to ben a mayden all my lif,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wif.
I am (thou woſt) yet of thy compagnie,
A mayde, and love hunting and venerie,

And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And not to ben a wif, and be with childe.
Nought wol I knowen compagnie of man.
Now helpe me, lady, ſith ye may and can,
For tho three formes that thou haſt in thee.
And Palamon, that hath ſwiche love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me ſo ſore,
This grace I praie thee withouten more,
As ſende love and pees betwix hem two:
And fro me torne away hir hertes ſo,
That all hir hote love, and hir deſire,
And all hir beſy torment, and hir fire
Be queinte, or torned in another place.
And if ſo be thou wolt not do me grace,
Or if my deſtinee be ſhapen ſo,
That I ſhall nedes have on of hem two,
As ſende me him that moſt deſireth me.
Behold, goddeſſe of clene chaſtite,
The bitter teres, that on my chekes fall.
Sin thou art mayde, and keper of us all,
My maydenhed thou kepe and wel conſerve,
And while I live, a mayde I wol thee ſerve.
The fires brenne upon the auter clere,
While Emelie was thus in hire praiere:
But ſodenly ſhe ſaw a ſighte queinte.
For right anon on of the fires queinte,

And quiked again, and after that anon
That other fire was queinte, and all agon:
And as it queinte, it made a whiſteling,
As don theſe brondes wet in hir brenning.
And at the brondes ende outran anon
As it were blody dropes many on:
For which ſo ſore agaſt was Emelie,
That ſhe was wel neigh mad, and gan to crie,
For ſhe ne wiſte what it ſignified;
But only for the fere thus ſhe cried,
And wept, that it was pitee for to here.
And therwithall Diane gan appere
With bowe in hond, right as an huntereſſe,
And ſayde; doughter, ſtint thin hevineſſe.
Among the goddes highe it is affermed,
And by eterne word written and confermed,
Thou ſhalt be wedded unto on of tho,
That han for thee ſo mochel care and wo:
But unto which of hem I may not tell.
Farewel, for here I may no longer dwell.
The fires which that on min auter brenne,
Shal thee declaren er that thou go henne,
Thin aventure of love, as in this cas.
And with that word, the arwes in the cas
Of the goddeſſe clatteren faſt and ring,
And forth ſhe went, and made a vaniſhing,

For which this Emelie aſtonied was,
And ſayde; what amounteth this, alas!
I putte me in thy protection,
Diane, and in thy diſpoſition.
And home ſhe goth anon the nexte way.
This is the effecte, ther n'is no more to ſay.

The nexte houre of Mars folwing this
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierce Mars, to don his ſacrifiſe
With all the rites of his payen wiſe.
With pitous herte and high devotion,
Right thus to Mars he ſayde his oriſon.

O ſtronge god, that in the regnes cold
Of Trace honoured art, and lord yhold,
And haſt in every regne and every lond
Of armes all the bridel in thin hond,
And hem fortuneſt as thee liſt deviſe,
Accept of me my pitous ſacrifiſe.
If ſo be that my youthe may deſerve,
And that my might be worthy for to ſerve
Thy godhed, that I may ben on of thine,
Than praie I thee to rewe upon my pine,
For thilke peine, and thilke hote fire,
In which thou whilom brendeſt for deſire
Whanne that thou uſedeſt the beautee
Of fayre yonge Venus, freſhe and free,

And haddeſt hire in armes at thy wille:
Although thee ones on a time misfille,
Whan Vulcanus had caught thee in his las,
And fond the ligging by his wif, alas!
For thilke ſorwe that was tho in thin herte,
Have reuthe as wel upon my peines ſmerte.
I am yonge and unkonning, as thou woſt,
And, as I trow, with love offended moſt,
That ever was ony lives creature:
For ſhe, that doth me all this wo endure,
Ne recceth never, whether I ſinke or flete.
And wel I wot, or ſhe me mercy hete,
I moſte with ſtrengthe win hire in the place:
And wel I wot, withouten helpe or grace
Of thee, ne may my ſtrengthe not availle:
Than helpe me, lord, to-morwe in my bataille,
For thilke fire that whilom brenned thee,
As wel as that this fire now brenneth me;
And do, that I to-morwe may han victorie.
Min be the travaille, and thin be the glorie.
Thy ſoveraine temple wol I moſt honouren
Of ony place, and alway moſt labouren
In thy pleſance and in thy craftes ſtrong.
And in thy temple I wol my baner hong,
And all the armes of my compagnie,
And evermore, until that day I die,

Eterne fire I wol beforne thee finde,
And eke to this avow I wol me binde.
My berd, my here that hangeth long adoun,
That never yet felt non offenſion
Of raſour ne of ſhere, I wol thee yeve,
And ben thy trewe ſervant while I live.
Now, lord, have reuthe upon my ſorwes ſore,
Yeve me the victorie, I axe thee no more.
The praier ſtint of Arcita the ſtronge,
The ringes on the temple dore that honge,
And eke the dores clattereden ful faſte,
Of which Arcita ſomwhat him agaſte.
The fires brent upon the auter bright,
That it gan all the temple for to light;
A ſwete ſmell anon the ground up yaf,
And Arcita anon his hond up haf,
And more encenſe into the fire he caſt,
With other rites mo, and at the laſt
The ſtatue of Mars began his hauberke ring;
And with that ſoun he herd a murmuring
Ful low and dim, that ſayde thus, Victorie.
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anon unto his inne is fare,
As fayn as foul is of the brighte ſonne.
And right anon ſwiche ſtrif ther is begonne

For thilke granting, in the heven above,
Betwixen Venus the goddeſſe of love,
And Mars the ſterne god armipotent,
That Jupiter was beſy it to ſtent:
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew ſo many of aventures olde,
Fond in his olde experience and art,
That he ful ſone hath pleſed every part.
As ſooth is ſayd, elde hath gret avantage,
In elde is bothe wiſdom and uſage:
Men may the old out-renne, but not out-rede.

Saturne anon, to ſtenten ſtrif and drede,
Al be it that it is again his kind,
Of all this ſtrif he gan a remedy find.

My dere doughter Venus, quod Saturne,
My cours, that hath ſo wide for to turne,
Hath more power than wot any man.
Min is the drenching in the ſee ſo wan,
Min is the priſon in the derke cote,
Min is the ſtrangel and hanging by the throte,
The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,
The groyning, and the prive empoyſoning.
I do vengeance and pleine correction,
While I dwell in the ſigne of the leon.
Min is the ruine of the highe halles,
The falling of the toures and of the walles

Upon the minour, or the carpenter:
I ſlew Sampſon in ſhaking the piler.
Min ben alſo the maladies colde,
The derke treſons, and the caſtes olde:
My loking is the fader of peſtilence.
Now wepe no more, I ſhal do diligence,
That Palamon, that is thin owen knight,
Shal have his lady, as thou haſt him hight.
Thogh Mars ſhal help his knight yet natheles.
Betwixen you ther mot ſomtime be pees:
All be ye not of o complexion,
That cauſeth all day ſwiche diviſion.
I am thin ayel, redy at thy will;
Wepe now no more, I ſhal thy luſt fulfill.

Now wol I ſtenten of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus goddeſſe of love,
And tellen you as plainly as I can
The gret effect, for which that I began.

Gret was the feſte in Athenes thilke day,
And eke the luſty ſeſon of that May
Made every wight to ben in ſwiche pleſance,
That all that monday juſten they and dance,
And ſpenden it in Venus highe ſerviſe.
But by the cauſe that they ſhulden riſe
Erly a-morwe for to ſeen the fight,
Unto hir reſte wenten they at night.

And on the morwe whan the day gan ſpring,
Of hors and harneis noiſe and clattering
Ther was in the hoſtelries all aboute:
And to the paleis rode ther many a route
Of lordes, upon ſtedes and palfreis.
Ther mayſt thou ſee deviſing of harneis
So uncouth and ſo riche, and wrought ſo wele
Of goldſmithry, of brouding, and of ſtele;
The ſheldes brighte, teſteres, and trappures;
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordes in parementes on hir courſeres,
Knightes of retenue, and eke ſquieres,
Nailing the ſperes, and helmes bokeling,
Gniding of ſheldes, with lainers lacing;
Ther as nede is, they weren nothing idel:
The fomy ſtedes on the golden bridel
Gnawing, and faſt the armureres alſo
With file and hammer priking to and fro;
Yemen on foot, and communes many on
With ſhorte ſtaves, thicke as they may gon;
Pipes, trompes, nakeres, and clarioúnes,
That in the bataille blowen blody ſounes;
The paleis-ful of peple up and doun,
Here three, ther ten, holding hir queſtioun,
Devining of theſe Theban knightes two.
Som ſayden thus, ſom ſayde it ſhal be ſo;

Som helden with him with the blacke berd,
Som with the balled, ſom with the thick herd;
Som ſaide he loked grim, and wolde fighte:
He hath a ſparth of twenty pound of wighte.

Thus was the halle full of devining
Long after that the ſonne gan up ſpring.
The gret Theſeus that of his ſlepe is waked
With minſtralcie and noiſe that was maked,
Held yet the chambre of his paleis riche,
Til that the Theban knightes bothe yliche
Honoured were, and to the paleis fette.

Duk Theſeus is at a window ſette,
Araied right as he were a god in trone:
The peple preſeth thiderward ful ſone
Him for to ſeen, and don high reverence,
And eke to herken his heſte and his ſentence.

An heraud on a ſcaffold made an o,
Til that the noiſe of the peple was ydo:
And whan he ſaw the peple of noiſe al ſtill,
Thus ſhewed he the mighty dukes will.

The lord hath of his high diſcretion
Conſidered, that it were deſtruction
To gentil blood, to fighten in the giſe
Of mortal bataille now in this empriſe:
Wherfore to ſhapen that they ſhul not die,
He wol his firſte purpos modifie.

No man therfore, up peine of loſſe of lif,
No maner ſhot, ne pollax, ne ſhort knif
Into the liſtes ſend, or thider bring.
Ne ſhort ſwerd for to ſtike with point biting
No man ne draw, ne bere it by his ſide.
Ne no man ſhal unto his felaw ride
But o cours, with a ſharpe ygrounden ſpere:
Foin if him liſt on foot, himſelf to were.
And he that is at meſchief, ſhal be take,
And not ſlaine, but be brought unto the ſtake,
That ſhal ben ordeined on eyther ſide,
Thider he ſhal by force, and ther abide.
And if ſo fall, the chevetain be take
On eyther ſide, or elles ſleth his make,
No longer ſhal the tourneying ylaſt.
God ſpede you; goth forth and lay on faſt.
With longe ſwerd and with maſe fighteth your fill.
Goth now your way; this is the lordes will.
The vois of the peple touched to the heven,
So loude crieden they with mery ſteven:
God ſave ſwiche a lord that is ſo good,
He wilneth no deſtruction of blood.
Up gon the trompes and the melodie,
And to the liſtes rit the compagnie
By ordinance, thurghout the cite large,
Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with ſarge.

Ful like a lord this noble duk gan ride,
And theſe two Thebans upon eyther ſide:
And after rode the quene and Emelie,
And after that another compagnie
Of on and other, after hir degree.
And thus they paſſen thurghout the citee,
And to the liſtes comen they be time:
It n'as not of the day yet fully prime.

Whan ſet was Theſeus ful rich and hie,
Ipolita the quene, and Emelie,
And other ladies in degrees aboute,
Unto the ſetes preſeth all the route.
And weſtward, thurgh the gates under Mart,
Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
With baner red, is entred right anon;
And in the ſelve moment Palamon
Is, under Venus, eſtward in the place,
With baner white, and hardy chere and face.
In all the world, to ſeken up and doun,
So even without variatioun
Ther n'ere ſwiche compagnies never twey.
For ther was non ſo wiſe that coude ſey,
That any hadde of other avantage
Of worthineſſe, ne of eſtat, ne age,
So even were they choſen for to geſſe.
And in two renges fayre they hem dreſſe.

Whan that hir names red were everich on,
That in hir nombre gile were ther non,
Tho were the gates ſhette, and cried was loude;
Do now your devoir, yonge knightes proude.
The heraudes left hir priking up and doun.
Now ringen trompes loud and clarioun.
Ther is no more to ſay, but eſt and weſt
In gon the ſperes ſadly in the reſt;
In goth the ſharpe ſpore into the ſide.
Ther ſee men who can juſte, and who can ride.
Ther ſhiveren ſhaftes upon ſheldes thicke;
He feleth thurgh the herte-ſpone the pricke.
Up ſpringen ſperes twenty foot on highte;
Out gon the ſwerdes as the ſilver brighte.
The helmes they to-hewen, and to-ſhrede;
Out breſt the blod, with ſterne ſtremes rede.
With mighty maces the bones they to-breſte.
He thurgh the thickeſt of the throng gan threſte.
Ther ſtomblen ſtedes ſtrong, and doun goth all.
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
He foineth on his foo with a tronchoun,
And he him hurtleth with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body is hurt, and ſith ytake
Maugre his hed, and brought unto the ſtake,
As forword was, right ther he muſt abide.
Another lad is on that other ſide.

And ſomtime doth hem Theſeus to reſt,
Hem to refreſh, and drinken if hem leſt.
Ful oft a day han thilke Thebanes two
Togeder met, and wrought eche other wo:
Unhorſed hath eche other of hem twey.
Ther n'as no tigre in the vale of Galaphey,
Whan that hire whelpe is ſtole, whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
For jalous herte upon this Palamon:
Ne in Belmarie ther n'is ſo fell leon,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his prey deſireth ſo the blood,
As Palamon to ſleen his foo Arcite.
The jalous ſtrokes on hir helmes bite;
Out renneth blood on both hir ſides rede.
Somtime an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the ſonne unto the reſte went,
The ſtronge king Emetrius gan hent
This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
And made his ſwerd depe in his fleſh to bite.
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawen to the ſtake.
And in the reſcous of this Palamon
The ſtronge king Licurge is borne adoun:
And king Emetrius for all his ſtrengthe
Is borne out of his ſadel a ſwerdes lengthe,

So hitte him Palamon or he were take:
But all for nought, he was brought to the ſtake:
His hardy herte might him helpen naught,
He moſte abiden, whan that he was caught,
By force, and eke by compoſition.
Who ſorweth now but woful Palamon?
That moſte no more gon again to fight.
And whan that Theſeus had ſeen that fight,
Unto the folk that foughten thus eche on,
He cried, ho! no more, for it is don.
I wol be trewe juge, and not partie.
Arcite of Thebes ſhal have Emelie,
That by his fortune hath hire fayre ywonne.
Anon ther is a noiſe of peple begonne
For joye of this, ſo loud and high withall,
It ſemed that the liſtes ſhulden fall.
What can now fayre Venus don above?
What ſaith ſhe now? what doth this quene of love?
But wepeth ſo, for wanting of hire will,
Til that hire teres in the liſtes fill:
She ſayde: I am aſhamed doutelees.
Saturnus ſayde: Daughter, hold thy pees.
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his bone,
And by min hed thou ſhalt ben eſed ſone.
The trompoures with the loude minſtralcie,
The heraudes, that ſo loude yell and crie,

Ben in hir joye for wele of Dan Arcite.
But herkeneth me, and ſtenteth noiſe a lite,
Whiche a miracle ther befell anon.
This fierce Arcite hath of his helme ydon,
And on a courſer for to ſhew his face
He priketh endelong the large place,
Loking upward upon this Emelie;
And ſhe again him caſt a frendlich eye,
(For women, as to ſpeken in commune,
They folwen all the favour of fortune)
And was all his in chere, as his in herte.
Out of the ground a fury infernal ſterte,
From Pluto ſent, at requeſte of Saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And lepte aſide, and foundred as he lepe:
And er that Arcite may take any kepe,
He pight him on the pomel of his hed,
That in the place he lay as he were ded,
His breſt to-broſten with his ſadel bow.
As blake he lay as any cole or crow,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborne out of the place
With herte ſore, to Theſeus paleis.
Tho was he corven out of his harneis,
And in a bed ybrought ful fayre and blive,
For he was yet in memorie, and live,

And alway crying after Emelie.

Duk Theſeus, with all his compagnie,
Is comen home to Athenes his citee,
With alle bliſſe and gret ſolempnite.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He n'olde not diſcomforten hem alle.
Men ſayden eke, that Arcite ſhal not die,
He ſhal ben heled of his maladie.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther non yſlain,
Al were they ſore yhurt, and namely on,
That with a ſpere was thirled his breſt bone.
To other woundes, and to broken armes,
Som hadden ſalves, and ſom hadden charmes:
And fermacies of herbes, and eke ſave
They dronken, for they wold hir lives have.
For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel all the longe night,
Unto the ſtrange lordes, as was right.
Ne ther n'as holden no diſcomforting,
But as at juſtes or a tourneying;
For ſothly ther n'as no diſcomfiture,
For falling n'is not but an aventure.
Ne to be lad by force unto a ſtake
Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,

O perſon all alone, withouten mo,
And haried forth by armes, foot, and too,
And eke his ſtede driven forth with ſtaves,
With footmen, bothe yemen and eke knaves,
It was aretted him no vilanie:
Ther may no man clepen it cowardie.
For which anon duk Theſeus let crie,
To ſtenten alle rancour and envie,
The gree as wel of o ſide as of other,
And eyther ſide ylike, as others brother:
And yave hem giftes after hir degree,
And helde a feſte fully dayes three:
And conveyed the kinges worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And home went every man the righte way,
Ther n'as no more, but farewel, have good day.
Of this bataille I wol no more endite,
But ſpeke of Palamon and of Arcite.

Swelleth the breſt of Arcite, and the ſore
Encreſeth at his herte more and more.
The clotered blood, for any leche-craft,
Corrumpeth, and is in his bouke ylaft,
That neyther veine-blood, ne ventouſing,
Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helping.
The vertue expulſif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertue cleped natural,

Ne may the venime voiden, ne expell.
The pipes of his longes gan to ſwell,
And every lacerte in his breſt adoun
Is ſhent with venime and corruptioun.
Him gaineth neyther, for to get his lif,
Vomit upward, ne dounward laxatif;
All is to-broſten thilke region;
Nature hath now no domination.
And certainly ther nature wol not werche,
Farewel phyſike; go bere the man to cherche.
This is all and ſom, that Arcite moſte die.
For which he ſendeth after Emelie,
And Palamon, that was his coſin dere.
Than ſayd he thus, as ye ſhuln after here.

Nought may the woful ſpirit in myn herte
Declare o point of all my ſorwes ſmerte
To you, my lady, that I love moſt;
But I bequethe the ſervice of my goſt
To you aboven every creature,
Sin that my lif ne may no lenger dure.

Alas the wo! alas the peines ſtronge,
That I for you have ſuffered, and ſo longe!
Alas the deth! alas min Emelie!
Alas departing of our compagnie!
Alas min hertes quene! alas my wif!
Min hertes ladie, ender of my lif!

What is this world? what axen men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Alone withouten any compagnie.
Farewel my ſwete, farewel min Emelie,
And ſofte take me in your armes twey,
For love of God, and herkeneth what I ſey.
I have here with my coſin Palamon
Had ſtrif and rancour many a day agon
For love of you, and for my jalouſie.
And Jupiter ſo wis my ſoule gie,
To ſpeken of a ſervant proprely,
With alle circumſtances trewely,
That is to ſayn, trouth, honour, and knighthede,
Wiſdom, humbleſſe, eſtat, and high kinrede,
Fredom, and all that longeth to thát art,
So Jupiter have of my ſoule part,
As in this world right now ne know I non,
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That ſerveth you, and wol don all his lif.
And if that ever ye ſhal ben a wif,
Foryete not Palamon, the gentil man.
And with that word his ſpeche faille began.
For from his feet up to his breſt was come
The cold of deth, that had him overnome.
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital ſtrength is loſt, and all ago.

Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte ſike and ſore,
Gan faillen, whan the herte felte deth;
Duſked his eyen two, and failled his breth.
But on his ladie yet caſt he his eye;
His laſte word was; Mercy, Emelie!
His ſpirit changed hous, and wente ther,
As I came never I cannot tellen wher.
Therfore I ſtent, I am no diviniſtre;
Of ſoules find I not in this regiſtre.
Ne me luſt not th' opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is cold, ther Mars his ſoule gie.
Now wol I ſpeken forth of Emelie.
Shright Emelie, and houleth Palamon,
And Theſeus his ſiſter toke anon
Swouning, and bare hire from the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day,
To tellen how ſhe wep both even and morwe?
For in ſwiche cas wimmen have ſwiche ſorwe,
Whan that hir houſbonds ben fro hem ago,
That for the more part they ſorwen ſo,
Or elles fallen in ſwiche maladie,
That atte laſte certainly they die.
Infinite ben the ſorwes and the teres
Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres,

In all the toun for deth of this Theban:
For him ther wepeth bothe childe and man.
So gret a weping was ther non certain,
Whan Hector was ybrought, all freſh yſlain
To Troy, alas! the pitee that was there,
Cratching of chekes, rending eke of here.
Why woldeſt thou be ded? thiſe women crie,
And haddeſt gold ynough, and Emelie.

No man might gladen this duk Theſeus,
Saving his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes tranſmutatioun,
As he had ſeen it chaungen up and doun,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladneſſe;
And ſhewed him enſample and likeneſſe.

Right as ther died never man (quod he)
That he ne lived in erthe in ſom degree,
Right ſo ther lived never man (he ſeyd)
In all this world, that ſomtime he ne deyd.
This world n'is but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we ben pilgrimes, paſſing to and fro:
Deth is an end of every worldes ſore.

And over all this yet ſaid he mochel more
To this effect, ful wiſely to enhort
The peple, that they ſhuld hem recomfort.

Duk Theſeus with all his beſy cure
He caſteth now, wher that the ſepulture

reherseth?

Of good Arcite may beſt ymaked be,
And eke moſt honourable in his degree.
And at the laſt he toke concluſion,
That ther as firſt Arcite and Palamon
Hadden for love the bataille hem betwene,
That in that ſelve grove, ſote and grene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous deſires,
His complaint, and for love his hote fires,
He wolde make a fire, in which the office
Of funeral he might all accompliſe;
And lete anon commande to hack and hewe
The okes old, and lay hem on a rew
In culpons, wel araied for to brenne.
His officers with ſwifte feet they renne
And ride anon at his commandement.
And after this, this Theſeus hath ſent
After a bere, and it all overſpradde
With cloth of gold, the richeſt that he hadde;
And of the ſame ſuit he cladde Arcite.
Upon his hondes were his gloves white,
Eke on his hed a croune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a ſwerd ful bright and kene.
He laid him bare the viſage on the bere,
Therwith he wept that pitee was to here.
And for the peple ſhulde ſeen him alle,
Whan it was day he brought him to the halle,

That roreth of the crying and the ſoun.
Tho came this woful Theban Palamon
With flotery berd, and ruggy aſshy heres,
In clothes blake, ydropped all with teres,
And (paſſing over of weping Emelie)
The reufulleſt of all the compagnie.
And in as much as the ſervice ſhuld be
The more noble and riche in his degree,
Duk Theſeus let forth three ſtedes bring,
That trapped were in ſtele all glittering,
And covered with the armes of Dan Arcite.
And eke upon theſe ſtedes gret and white
Ther ſaten folk, of which on bare his ſheld,
Another his ſpere up in his hondes held;
The thridde bare with him his bow Turkeis,
Of brent gold was the cas and the harneis:
And riden forth a pas with ſorweful chere
Toward the grove, as ye ſhul after here.
The nobleſt of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir ſhuldres carrieden the bere,
With ſlacke pas, and eyen red and wete,
Thurghout the citee, by the maiſter ſtrete,
That ſprad was all with black, and wonder hie
Right of the ſame is all the ſtrete ywrie.
Upon the right hand went olde Egeus,
And on that other ſide duk Theſeus,

With veſſels in hir hond of gold ful fine,
All ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wine;
Eke Palamon, with ful gret compagnie:
And after that came woful Emelie,
With fire in hond, as was that time the giſe,
To don the office of funeral ſervice.

High labour, and ful gret apparailling
Was at the ſervice of that fire making,
That with his grene top the heven raught,
And twenty fadom of brede the armes ſtraught:
This is to ſain, the boughes were ſo brode.
Of ſtre firſt ther was laied many a lode.

But how the fire was maked up on highte,
And eke the names how the trees highte,
As oke, fir, birch, aſpe, alder, holm, poplere,
Wilow, elm, plane, aſh, box, cheſtein, lind, laurere,
Maple, thorn, beche, haſel, ew, whipultre,
How they were feld, ſhal not be told for me;
Ne how the goddes rannen up and doun
Diſherited of hir habitatioun,
In which they woneden in reſt and pees,
Nimphes, Faunes, and Amadriades;
Ne how the beſtes, and the briddes alle
Fledden for fere, whan the wood gan falle;
Ne how the ground agaſt was of the light,
That was not wont to ſee the ſonne bright;

Ne how the fire was couched firſt with ſtre,
And than with drie ſtickes cloven a-thre,
And than with grene wood and ſpicerie,
And than with cloth of gold and with perrie,
And gerlonds hanging with ful many a flour,
The mirre, th'encenſe alſo with ſwete odour;
Ne how Arcita lay among all this,
Ne what richeſſe about his body is;
Ne how that Emelie, as was the giſe,
Put in the fire of funeral ſervice;
Ne how ſhe ſwouned whan ſhe made the fire,
Ne what ſhe ſpake, ne what was hir deſire;
Ne what jewelles men in the fire caſte,
Whan that the fire was gret and brente faſte;
Ne how ſom caſt hir ſheld, and ſom hir ſpere,
And of hir veſtimentes, which they were,
And cuppes full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that brent as it were wood;
Ne how the Grekes with a huge route
Three times riden all the fire aboute.
Upon the left hond, with a loud ſhouting,
And thries with hir ſperes clatering;
And thries how the ladies gan to crie;
Ne how that led was homeward Emelie;
Ne how Arcite is brent to aſhen cold;
Ne how the liche-wake was yhold

All thilke night, ne how the Grekes play.
The wake-plaies ne kepe I not to ſay:
Who wreſtled beſt naked, with oile enoint,
Ne who that bare him beſt in no disjoint.
I woll not tellen eke how they all gon
Home til Athenes whan the play is don;
But ſhortly to the point now wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proceſſe and by lengthe of certain yeres
All ſtenten is the mourning and the teres
Of Grekes, by on general aſſent.
Than ſemeth me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, upon certain points and cas:
Amonges the which points yſpoken was
To have with certain contrees alliance,
And have of Thebanes fully obeiſance.
For which this noble Theſeus anon
Let ſenden after gentil Palamon,
Unwiſt of him, what was the cauſe and why:
But in his blacke clothes ſorwefully
He came at his commandement on hie;
Tho ſente Theſeus for Emelie.

Whan they were ſet, and huſht was al the place,
And Theſeus abiden hath a ſpace,
Or any word came from his wiſe breſt
His eyen ſet he ther as was his leſt,

And with a ſad viſage he ſiked ſtill,
And after that right thus he ſayd his will.
The firſte mover of the cauſe above
Whan he firſte made the fayre chaine of love,
Gret was th'effect, and high was his entent;
Wel wiſt he why, and what therof he ment:
For with that fayre chaine of love he bond
The fire, the air, the watre, and the lond
In certain bondes, that they may not flee:
That ſame prince and mover eke (quod he)
Hath ſtabliſht, in this wretched world adoun,
Certain of dayes and duration
To all that are engendred in this place,
Over the which day they ne mow not pace,
Al mow they yet dayes wel abrege.
Ther nedeth non autoritee allege,
For it is preved by experience,
But that me luſt declaren my ſentence.
Than may men by this ordre wel diſcerne,
That thilke mover ſtable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowen, but it be a fool,
That every part deriveth from his hool.
For nature hath not taken his beginning
Of no partie ne cantel of a thing,
But of a thing that parfit is and ſtable,
Deſcending ſo, til it be corrumpable.

And therfore of his wiſe purveyance
He hath ſo wel beſet his ordinance,
That ſpeces of thinges and progreſſions
Shullen enduren by ſucceſſions,
And not eterne, withouten any lie:
This maieſt thou underſtand and ſeen at eye.
Lo the oke, that hath ſo long a noriſhing
Fro the time that it ginneth firſt to ſpring,
And hath ſo long a lif, as ye may ſee,
Yet at the laſte waſted is the tree.
Conſidereth eke, how that the harde ſtone
Under our feet, on which we trede and gon,
It waſteth, as it lieth by the wey.
The brode river ſomtime wexeth drey.
The grete tounes ſee we wane and wende.
Than may ye ſee that all thing hath an ende.
Of man and woman ſee we wel alſo,
That nedes in on of the termes two,
That is to ſayn, in youthe or elles age,
He mote be ded, the king as ſhall a page;
Som in his bed, ſom in the depe ſee,
Som in the large feld, as ye may ſee:
Ther helpeth nought, all goth that ilke wey:
Than may I ſayn that alle thing mote dey.
What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
The which is prince, and cauſe of alle thing,

Converting alle unto his propre wille,
From which it is derived, ſoth to telle.
And here-againes no creature on live
Of no degree availleth for to ſtrive.
Than is it wiſdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken vertue of neceſſite,
And take it wel, that we may not eſchewe,
And namely that to us all is dewe.
And who ſo grutcheth ought, he doth folie,
And rebel is to him that all may gie.
And certainly a man hath moſt honour
To dien in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is ſiker of his goode name.
Than hath he don his frend, ne him, no ſhame;
And glader ought his frend ben of his deth,
Whan with honour is yolden up his breth,
Than whan his name appalled is for age;
For all foryetten is his vaſſallage.
Than is it beſt, as for a worthy fame,
To dien whan a man is beſt of name.
The contrary of all this is wilfulneſſe.
Why grutchen we? why have we hevineſſe,
That good Arcite, of chivalry the flour,
Departed is, with dutee and honour,
Out of this foule priſon of this lif?
Why grutchen here his coſin and his wif

Of his welfare, that loven him ſo wel?
Can he hem thank? nay, God wot, never a del,
That both his ſoule, and eke hemſelf offend,
And yet they mow hir luſtes not amend.

What may I conclude of this longe ſerie,
But after ſorwe I rede us to be merie,
And thanken Jupiter of all his grace.
And er that we departen from this place,
I rede that we make of ſorwes two
O parfit joye laſting evermo:
And loketh now wher moſt ſorwe is herein,
Ther wol I firſte amenden and begin.

Siſter, (quod he) this is my full aſſent,
With all th'avis here of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owen knight,
That ſerveth you with will, and herte, and might,
And ever hath don, ſin ye firſt him knew,
That ye ſhall of your grace upon him rew,
And taken him for huſbond and for lord:
Lene me your hand, for this is oure accord.

Let ſee now of your womanly pitee.
He is a kinges brothers ſone pardee,
And though he were a poure bachelere,
Sin he hath ſerved you ſo many a yere,
And had for you ſo gret adverſite,
It moſte ben conſidered, leveth me.

For gentil mercy oweth to paſſen right.
Than ſayd he thus to Palamon the knight;
I trow ther nedeth litel ſermoning
To maken you aſſenten to this thing.
Cometh ner, and take your lady by the hond.
Betwixen hem was maked anon the bond,
That highte matrimoine or mariage,
By all the conſeil of the baronage.
And thus with alle bliſſe and melodie
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelie.
And God that all this wide world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dere ybought.
For now is Palamon in alle wele,
Living in bliſſe, in richeſſe, and in hele,
And Emelie him loveth ſo tendrely,
And he hire ſerveth al ſo gentilly,
That never was ther no word hem betwene
Of jalouſie, ne of non other tene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelie;
And God ſave all this fayre compagnie.

THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

v. 3111—3130

Whan that the Knight had thus his tale told,
In all the compagnie n'as ther yong ne old,
That he ne ſaid it was a noble ſtorie,
And worthy to be drawen to memorie;
And namely the gentiles everich on.
Our Hoſte lough and ſwore, So mote I gon,
This goth aright; unbokeled is the male;
Let ſee now who ſhal tell another tale:
For trewely this game is wel begonne.
Now telleth ye, ſire Monk, if that ye conne,
Somwhat, to quiten with the knightes tale.
The Miller that for-dronken was all pale,
So that unethes upon his hors he ſat,
He n'old avalen neither hood ne hat,
Ne abiden no man for his curteſie,
But in Pilates vois he gan to crie,
And ſwore by armes, and by blood, and bones,
I can a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the knightes tale.
Our Hoſte ſaw that he was dronken of ale,

And ſayd; abide, Robin, my leve brother,
Som better man ſhall tell us firſt another:
Abide, and let us werken thriftily.
By Goddes ſoule (quod he) that wol not I,
For I wol ſpeke, or elles go my way.
Our Hoſte anſwerd; Tell on a devil way;
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.
Now herkeneth, quod the Miller, all and ſome:
But firſt I make a proteſtatioun,
That I am dronke, I know it by my ſoun:
And therfore if that I misſpeke or ſay,
Wite it the ale of Southwerk, I you pray:
For I wol tell a legend and a lif
Both of a carpenter and of his wif,
How that a clerk hath ſet the wrightes cappe.
The Reve anſwerd and ſaide, Stint thy clappe.
Let be thy lewed dronken harlotrie.
It is a ſinne, and eke a gret folie
To apeiren any man, or him defame,
And eke to bringen wives in ſwiche a name.
Thou mayſt ynough of other thinges ſain.
This dronken Miller ſpake ful ſone again,
And ſayde; Leve brother Oſewold,
Who hath no wif, he is no cokewold.
But I ſay not therfore that thou art on;
Ther ben ful goode wives many on.

Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wif parde as wel as thou,
Yet n'olde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Taken upon me more than ynough
As demen of myſelf that I am on;
I wol beleven wel that I am non.
An huſbond ſhuld not ben inquiſitif
Of Goddes privite, ne of his wif.
So he may finden Goddes foiſon there,
Of the remenant nedeth not to enquere.

What ſhuld I more ſay, but this Millere
He n'olde his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherles tale in his manere,
Me thinketh, that I ſhal reherſe it here.
And therfore every gentil wight I pray,
For Goddes love as deme not that I ſay
Of evil entent, but that I mote reherſe
Hir tales alle, al be they better or werſe,
Or elles falſen ſom of my matere.
And therfore who ſo liſt it not to here,
Turne over the leef, and cheſe another tale,
For he ſhal find ynow bothe gret and ſmale,
Of ſtorial thing that toucheth gentilleſſe,
And eke moralite, and holineſſe.
Blameth not me, if that ye cheſe amis.

The Miller is a cherl, ye know wel this,
So was the Reve, (and many other mo)
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Aviſeth you now, and put me out of blame;
And eke men ſhuld not make erneſt of game.

THE MILLERES TALE.

Whilom ther was dwelling in Oxenforde
A riche gnof, that geſtes helde to borde,
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him ther was dwelling a poure ſcoler,
Had lerned art, but all his fantaſie
Was turned for to lerne aſtrologie,
And coude a certain of concluſions
To demen by interrogations,
If that men aſked him in certain houres,
Whan that men ſhulde have drought or elles ſhoures:
Or if men aſked him what ſhulde falle
Of every thing, I may not reken alle.

This clerk was cleped hendy Nicholas;
Of derne love he coude and of ſolas;
And therto he was ſlie and ful prive,
And like a maiden meke for to ſe.

A chambre had he in that hoſtelrie
Alone, withouten any compagnie,
Ful fetiſly ydight with herbes ſote,
And he himſelf was ſwete as is the rote
Of licoris, or any ſetewale.
His almageſte, and bokes gret and ſmale,
His aſtrelabre, longing for his art,
His augrim ſtones, layen faire apart
On ſhelves couched at his beddes hed,
His preſſe ycovered with a falding red.
And all above ther lay a gay ſautrie,
On which he made on nightes melodie,
So ſwetely, that all the chambre rong:
And *Angelus ad virginem* he ſong.
And after that he ſong the kinges note;
Ful often bleſſed was his mery throte.
And thus this ſwete clerk his time ſpent
After his frendes finding and his rent.

This carpenter had wedded new a wif,
Which that he loved more than his lif:
Of eightene yere ſhe was I geſſe of age.
Jalous he was, and held hire narwe in cage,
For ſhe was wild and yonge, and he was old,
And demed himſelf belike a cokewold.
He knew not Caton, for his wit was rude,
That bade a man ſhulde wedde his ſimilitude.

Men ſhulden wedden after hir eſtate,
For youthe and elde is often at debate.
But ſithen he was fallen in the ſnare,
He moſt endure (as other folk) his care.

Fayre was this yonge wif, and therwithal
As any weſel hire body gent and ſmal.
A ſeint ſhe wered, barred all of ſilk,
A barme-cloth eke as white as morwe milk
Upon hire lendes, ful of many a gore.
White was hire ſmok, and brouded all before
And eke behind on hire colere aboute
Of cole-black ſilk, within and eke withoute.
The tapes of hire white volupere
Were of the ſame ſuit of hire colere;
Hire fillet brode of ſilk, and ſet full hye:
And ſikerly ſhe had a likerous eye.
Ful ſmal ypulled were hire browes two,
And they were bent, and black as any flo.
She was wel more blisful on to ſee
Than is the newe perjenete tree;
And ſofter than the wolle is of a wether.

And by hire girdel heng a purſe of lether,
Taſſeled with ſilk, and perled with latoun.
In all this world to ſeken up and doun
Ther n'is no man ſo wiſe, that coude thenche
So gay a popelot, or ſwiche a wenche.

Ful brighter was the ſhining of hire hewe,
Than in the tour the noble yforged newe.
But of hire ſong, it was as loud and yerne,
As any ſwalow ſitting on a berne.
Therto ſhe coude ſkip, and make a game,
As any kid or calf folowing his dame.
Hire mouth was ſwete as braket or the meth,
Or hord of apples, laid in hay or heth.
Winſing ſhe was, as is a joly colt,
Long as a maſt, and upright as a bolt.
A broche ſhe bare upon hire low colere,
As brode as is the boſſe of a bokelere.
Hire ſhoon were laced on hire legges hie;
She was a primerole, a piggeſnie,
For any lord to liggen in his bedde,
Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.
Now ſire, and eft ſire, ſo befell the cas,
That on a day this hendy Nicholas
Fel with this yonge wif to rage and pleye,
While that hire huſbond was at Oſeney,
As clerkes ben ful ſubtil and ful queint.
And prively he caught hire by the queint,
And ſayde; Ywis, but if I have my will,
For derne love of thee, lemman, I ſpill.
And helde hire faſte by the hanche bones,
And ſayde; Lemman, love me wel at ones,

Or I wol dien, al ſo God me ſave.
And ſhe ſprong as a colt doth in the trave:
And with hire hed ſhe writhed faſte away,
And ſayde; I wol not kiſſe thee by my fay.
Why let be, (quod ſhe) let be, Nicholas,
Or I wol crie out harow and alas.
Do way your hondes for your curteſie.
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crie,
And ſpake ſo faire, and profered him ſo faſt,
That ſhe hire love him granted at the laſt,
And ſwore hire oth by Seint Thomas of Kent,
That ſhe wold ben at his commandement,
Whan that ſhe may hire leiſer wel eſpie.
Myn huſbond is ſo ful of jalouſie,
That but ye waiten wel, and be prive,
I wot right wel I n'am but ded, quod ſhe.
Ye moſten be ful derne as in this cas.
Nay, therof care you not, quod Nicholas:
A clerk had litherly beſet his while,
But if he coude a carpenter begile.
And thus they were accorded and yſworne
To waite a time, as I have ſaid beforne.
Whan Nicholas had don thus every del,
And thacked hire about the lendes wel,
He kiſſed hire ſwete, and taketh his ſautrie,
And plaieth faſt, and maketh melodie.

Than fell it thus, that to the pariſh cherche
(Of Criſtes owen werkes for to werche)
This good wif went upon a holy day:
Hire forehed ſhone as bright as any day,
So was it waſhen, whan ſhe lete hire werk.
Now was ther of that chirche a pariſh clerk,
The which that was ycleped Abſolon.
Crulle was his here, and as the gold it ſhon,
And ſtrouted as a fanne large and brode;
Ful ſtreight and even lay his joly ſhode.
His rode was red, his eyen grey as goos,
With Poules windowes corven on his ſhoos.
In hoſen red he went ful fetiſly.
Yclad he was ful ſmal and proprely,
All in a kirtel of a light waget;
Ful faire and thicke ben the pointes ſet.
And therupon he had a gay ſurpliſe,
As white as is the bloſme upon the riſe.
A mery child he was, ſo God me ſave;
Wel coud he leten blod, and clippe, and ſhave,
And make a chartre of lond, and a quitance.
In twenty manere coud he trip and dance,
(After the ſcole of Oxenforde tho)
And with his legges caſten to and fro;
And playen ſonges on a ſmal ribible;
Therto he ſong ſomtime a loud quinible.

And as wel coud he play on a giterne.
In all the toun n'as brewhous ne taverne,
That he ne viſited with his ſolas,
Ther as that any gaillard tapſtere was.
But ſoth to ſay he was ſomdel ſquaimous
Of farting, and of ſpeche dangerous.

This Abſolon, that joly was and gay,
Goth with a cenſer on the holy day,
Cenſing the wives of the pariſh faſte;
And many a lovely loke he on hem caſte,
And namely on this carpenteres wif:
To loke on hire him thought a mery lif.
She was ſo propre, and ſwete, and likerous.
I dare wel ſain, if ſhe had ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wolde hire hente anon.

This pariſh clerk, this joly Abſolon,
Hath in his herte ſwiche a love-longing,
That of no wif toke he non offering;
For curteſie, he ſayd, he n'olde non.

The moone at night ful clere and brighte ſhon,
And Abſolon his giterne hath ytake,
For paramours he thoughte for to wake.
And forth he goth, jolif and amorous,
Til he came to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cockes had ycrow,
And dreſſed him up by a ſhot window,

That was upon the carpenteres wal.
He ſingeth in his vois gentil and ſmal;
Now, dere lady,—if thy wille be,
I pray you that ye—wol rewe on me;
Ful wel accordant to his giterning.
This carpenter awoke, and herd him ſing,
And ſpake unto his wif, and ſaid anon,
What, Aliſon, heres thou not Abſolon,
That chanteth thus under our boures wal?
And ſhe anſwerd hire huſbond therwithal;
Yes, God wot, John, I here him every del.
This paſſeth forth; what wol ye bet than wel?
Fro day to day this joly Abſolon
So loveth hire, that him is wo-begon.
He waketh all the night, and all the day,
He kembeth his lockes brode, and made him gay.
He woeth hire by menes and brocage,
And ſwore he wolde ben hire owen page.
He ſingeth brokking as a nightingale.
He ſent hire pinnes, methe, and ſpiced ale,
And wafres piping hot out of the glede:
And for ſhe was of toun, he profered mede.
For ſom folk wol be wonnen for richeſſe,
And ſom for ſtrokes, and ſom with gentilleſſe.
Somtime to ſhew his lightneſſe and maiſtrie
He plaieth Herode on a ſkaffold hie.

But what availeth him as in this cas?
So loveth ſhe this hendy Nicholas,
That Abſolon may blow the buckes horne:
He ne had for his labour but a ſcorne.
And thus ſhe maketh Abſolon hire ape,
And all his erneſt tourneth to a jape.
Ful ſoth is this proverbe, it is no lie;
Men ſay right thus alway; the neighe ſlie
Maketh oft time the fer leef to be lothe.
For though that Abſolon be wood or wrothe,
Becauſe that he fer was from hire ſight,
This neighe Nicholas ſtood in his light.
Now bere thee wel, thou hendy Nicholas,
For Abſolon may waile and ſing alas.
And ſo befell that on a Saturday,
This carpenter was gon to Oſenay,
And hendy Nicholas and Aliſon
Accorded ben to this concluſion,
That Nicholas ſhal ſhapen him a wile
This ſely jalous huſbond to begile;
And if ſo were the game went aright,
She ſhuld ſlepe in his armes alle night,
For this was hire deſire and his alſo.
And right anon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wolde tarie,
But doth ful ſoft unto his chambre carie

Both mete and drinke for a day or twey.
And to hire huſbond bad hire for to ſey,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
She ſhulde ſay, ſhe n'iſte not wher he was;
Of all the day ſhe ſaw him not with eye.
She trowed he was in ſom maladie,
For for no crie hire maiden coud him calle
He n'olde anſwer, for nothing that might falle.
Thus paſſeth forth all thilke Saturday,
That Nicholas ſtill in his chambre lay,
And ete, and ſlept, and dide what him liſt
Til Sonday, that the ſonne goth to reſt.
This ſely carpenter hath gret mervaile
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him aile,
And ſaid; I am adrad by Seint Thomas
It ſtondeth not aright with Nicholas:
God ſhilde that he died ſodenly.
This world is now ful tikel ſikerly.
I ſaw to-day a corps yborne to cherche,
That now on Monday laſt I ſaw him werche.
Go up (quod he unto his knave) anon;
Clepe at his dore, or knocke with a ſton:
Loke how it is, and tell me boldely.
This knave goth him up ful ſturdely,
And at the chambre dore while that he ſtood,
He cried and knocked as that he were wood:

What how? what do ye, maiſter Nicholay?
How may ye ſlepen all the longe day?
But all for nought, he herde not a word.
An hole he fond ful low upon the bord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,
And at that hole he loked in ful depe,
And at the laſt he had of him a ſight.
This Nicholas ſat ever gaping upright,
As he had kyked on the newe mone.
Adoun he goth, and telleth his maiſter ſone,
In what array he ſaw this ilke man.
This carpenter to bliſſen him began,
And ſaid; Now helpe us Seinte Frideſwide.
A man wote litel what ſhal him betide.
This man is fallen with his aſtronomie
In ſom woodneſſe or in ſom agonie.
I thought ay wel how that it ſhulde be.
Men ſhulde not knowe of Goddes privetee.
Ya bleſſed be alway a lewed man,
That nought but only his beleve can.
So ferd another clerk with aſtronomie;
He walked in the feldes for to prie
Upon the ſterres, what ther ſhuld befalle,
Til he was in a marlepit yfalle.
He ſaw not that. But yet by Seint Thomas
Me reweth ſore of hendy Nicholas:

He ſhal be rated of his ſtudying,
If that I may, by Jeſus heven king.
Get me a ſtaf, that I may underſpore
While that thou, Robin, heveſt of the dore:
He ſhal out of his ſtudying, as I geſſe.
And to the chambre dore he gan him dreſſe.
His knave was a ſtrong carl for the nones,
And by the haſpe he haf it of at ones;
Into the flore the dore fell anon.
This Nicholas ſat ay as ſtille as ſton,
And ever he gaped upward into the eire.
This carpenter wend he were in deſpeire,
And hent him by the ſhulders mightily,
And ſhoke him hard, and cried ſpitouſly;
What, Nicholas? what how man? loke adoun:
Awake, and thinke on Criſtes paſſioun.
I crouche thee from elves, and from wightes.
Therwith the nightſpel ſaid he anon rightes,
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threſwold of the dore withoute.
Jeſu Criſt, and Seint Benedight,
Bliſſe this hous from every wicked wight,
Fro the nightes mare, the wite Pater-noſter;
Wher woneſt thou Seint Peters ſuſter?
And at the laſt this hendy Nicholas
Gan for to ſiken ſore, and ſaid; Alas!

Shal all the world be loſt eftſones now?
This carpenter anſwered; What ſaieſt thou?
What? thinke on God, as we do, men that ſwinke.
This Nicholas anſwered; Fetch me a drinke;
And after wol I ſpeke in privetee
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I wol tell it non other man certain.
This carpenter goth doun, and cometh again,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart;
And whan that eche of hem had dronken his part,
This Nicholas his dore faſte ſhette,
And doun the carpenter by him he ſette,
And ſaide; John, min hoſte lefe and dere,
Thou ſhalt upon thy trouthe ſwere me here,
That to no wight thou ſhalt my conſeil wrey:
For it is Criſtes conſeil that I ſay,
And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore:
For this vengeance thou ſhalt have therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou ſhalt be wood.
Nay, Criſt forbede it for his holy blood,
Quod tho this ſely man; I am no labbe,
Ne though I ſay it, I n'am not lefe to gabbe.
Say what thou wolt, I ſhal it never telle
To child ne wif, by him that harwed helle.
Now, John, (quod Nicholas) I wol not lie,
I have yfounde in min aſtrologie,

As I have loked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Shal fall a rain, and that ſo wild and wood
That half ſo gret was never Noes flood.
This world (he ſaid) in leſſe than in an houre
Shal al be dreint, ſo hidous is the ſhoure:
Thus ſhal mankinde drenche, and leſe hir lif.

This carpenter anſwerd; Alas my wif!
And ſhal ſhe drenche? alas min Aliſoun!
For ſorwe of this he fell almoſt adoun,
And ſaid; Is ther no remedy in this cas?

Why yes, for God, quod hendy Nicholas;
If thou wolt werken after lore and rede;
Thou maiſt not werken after thin owen hede.
For thus ſaith Salomon, that was ful trewe;
Werke all by conſeil, and thou ſhalt not rewe.
And if thou werken wolt by good conſeil,
I undertake, withouten maſt or feyl,
Yet ſhal I ſaven hire, and thee and me.
Haſt thou not herd how ſaved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord had warned him beforne,
That al the world with water ſhuld be lorne?

Yes, (quod this carpenter) ful yore ago.

Haſt thou not herd (quod Nicholas) alſo
The ſorwe of Noe with his felawſhip,
Or that he might get his wif to ſhip?

Him had be lever, I dare wel undertake,
At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,
That ſhe had had a ſhip hireſelf alone.
And therfore woſt thou what is beſt to done?
This axeth haſt, and of an haſtif thing
Men may not preche and maken tarying.
Anon go get us faſt into this in
A kneding trough or elles a kemelyn,
For eche of us; but loke that they ben large,
In which we mowen ſwimme as in a barge:
And have therin vitaille ſuffiſant
But for a day; fie on the remenant;
The water ſhall aſlake and gon away
Abouten prime upon the nexte day.
But Robin may not wete of this, thy knave,
Ne eke thy mayden Gille I may not ſave:
Axe not why: for though thou axe me,
I wol not tellen Goddes privetee.
Sufficeth thee, but if thy wittes madde,
To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.
Thy wif ſhal I wel ſaven out of doute.
Go now thy way, and ſpede thee hereaboute.

But whan thou haſt for hire, and thee, and me,
Ygeten us theſe kneding tubbes thre,
Than ſhalt thou hang hem in the roofe ful hie,
That no man of our purveyance eſpie:

And whan thou haſt don thus as I have ſaid,
And haſt our vitaille faire in hem ylaid,
And eke an axe to ſmite the cord a-two
Whan that the water cometh, that we may go,
And breke an hole on high upon the gable
Unto the gardin ward, over the ſtable,
That we may frely paſſen forth our way,
Whan that the grete ſhoure is gon away.
Than ſhal thou ſwim as mery, I undertake,
As doth the white doke after hire drake:
Than wol I clepe, How Aliſon, how John,
Be mery: for the flood wol paſſe anon.
And thou wolt ſain, Haile maiſter Nicholay,
Good morwe, I ſee thee wel, for it is day.
And than ſhall we be lordes all our lif
Of all the world, as Noe and his wif.
But of o thing I warne thee ful right,
Be wel aviſed on that ilke night,
That we ben entred into ſhippes bord,
That non of us ne ſpeke not o word,
Ne clepe ne crie, but be in his praiere,
For it is Goddes owen heſte dere.
Thy wif and thou moſte hangen fer a-twinne,
For that betwixen you ſhal be no ſinne,
No more in loking than ther ſhal in dede.
This ordinance is ſaid; go, God thee ſpede.

To-morwe at night, whan men ben all aſlepe,
Into our kneding tubbes wol we crepe,
And ſitten ther, abiding Goddes grace.
Go now thy way, I have no lenger ſpace
To make of this no lenger ſermoning:
Men ſain thus: ſend the wiſe, and ſay nothing:
Thou art ſo wiſe, it nedeth thee nought teche.
Go, ſave our lives, and that I thee beſeche.

This ſely carpenter goth forth his way,
Ful oft he ſaid alas, and wala wa,
And to his wif he told his privetee,
And ſhe was ware, and knew it bet than he
What all this queinte caſt was for to ſey.
But natheles ſhe ferde as ſhe wold dey,
And ſaid; Alas! go forth thy way anon.
Helpe us to ſcape, or we be ded eche on.
I am thy trewe veray wedded wif;
Go, dere ſpouſe, and helpe to ſave our lif.

Lo, what a gret thing is affection,
Men may die of imagination,
So depe may impreſſion be take.
This ſely carpenter beginneth quake:
Him thinketh veraily that he may ſee
Noes flood comen walwing as the ſee
To drenchen Aliſon, his hony dere.
He wepeth, waileth, maketh ſory chere;

He ſiketh, with ful many a ſory ſwough.
He goth, and geteth him a kneding trough,
And after a tubbe, and a kemelin,
And prively he ſent hem to his in:
And heng hem in the roof in privetee.
His owen hond than made he ladders three,
To climben by the renges and the ſtalkes
Unto the tubbes honging in the balkes;
And vitailled bothe kemelin, trough and tubbe,
With bred and cheſe, and good ale in a jubbe,
Sufficing right ynow as for a day.

But er that he had made all this array,
He ſent his knave, and eke his wenche alſo
Upon his nede to London for to go.
And on the Monday, whan it drew to night,
He ſhette his dore, withouten candel light,
And dreſſed all thing as it ſhulde bee.
And ſhortly up they clomben alle three.
They ſitten ſtille wel a furlong way.
Now, *Pater noſter*, clum, ſaid Nicholay,
And clum, quod John, and clum, ſaid Aliſon:
This carpenter ſaid his devotion,
And ſtill he ſit, and biddeth his praiere,
Awaiting on the rain, if he it here.

The dede ſlepe, for wery beſineſſe,
Fell on this carpenter, right as I geſſe,

Abouten curfew-time, or litel more.
For travaille of his goſt he groneth ſore,
And eft he routeth, for his hed miſlay.
Doun of the ladder ſtalketh Nicholay,
And Aliſon ful ſoft adoun hire ſpedde.
Withouten wordes mo they went to bedde,
Ther as the carpenter was wont to lie;
Ther was the revel, and the melodie.
And thus lith Aliſon, and Nicholas,
In beſineſſe of mirthe and in ſolas,
Til that the bell of *laudes* gan to ring,
And freres in the chancel gon to ſing.
This pariſh clerk, this amorous Abſolon,
That is for love alway ſo wo-begon,
Upon the Monday was at Oſenay
With compagnie, him to diſport and play;
And aſked upon cas a cloiſterer
Ful prively after John the carpenter;
And he drew him apart out of the chirche.
He ſaid, I n'ot; I ſaw him not here wirche
Sith Saturday; I trow that he be went
For timbre, ther our abbot hath him ſent.
For he is wont for timbre for to go,
And dwellen at the Grange a day or two:
Or elles he is at his hous certain.
Wher that he be, I cannot ſothly ſain.

This Abſolon ful joly was and light,
And thoughte, now is time to wake al night,
For ſikerly, I ſaw him nat ſtiring
About his dore, ſin day began to ſpring.
So mote I thrive, I ſhal at cockes crow
Ful privelý go knocke at his window,
That ſtant ful low upon his boures wall:
To Aliſon wol I now tellen all
My love-longing; for yet I ſhall not miſſe,
That at the leſte way I ſhal hire kiſſe.
Some maner comfort ſhal I have parfay,
My mouth hath itched all this longe day:
That is a ſigne of kiſſing at the leſte.
All night me mette eke, I was at a feſte.
Therfore I wol go ſlepe an houre or twey,
And all the night than wol I wake and pley.

Whan that the firſte cock hath crowe, anon
Up riſt this joly lover Abſolon,
And him arayeth gay, at point deviſe.
But firſt he cheweth grein and licoriſe,
To ſmellen ſote, or he had ſpoke with here.
Under his tonge a trewe love he bere,
For therby wend he to ben gracious.
He cometh to the carpenteres hous,
And ſtill he ſtant under the ſhot window;
Unto his breſt it raught, it was ſo low;

And ſoft he cougheth with a ſemiſoun.
What do ye honycombe, ſwete Aliſoun?
My faire bird, my ſwete ſinamome,
Awaketh, lemman min, and ſpeketh to me.
Ful litel thinken ye upon my wo,
That for your love I ſwete ther as I go.
No wonder is though that I ſwelte and ſwete.
I mourne as doth a lamb after the tete.
Ywis, lemman, I have ſwiche love-longing,
That like a turtel trewe is my mourning.
I may not ete no more than a maid.
Go fro the window, jacke fool, ſhe ſaid:
As helpe me God, it wol not be, compame.
I love another, or elles I were to blame,
Wel bet than thee by Jeſu, Abſolon.
Go forth thy way, or I wol caſt a ſton;
And let me ſlepe; a twenty divel way.
Alas! (quod Abſolon) and wala wa!
That trewe love was ever ſo yvel beſette:
Than kiſſe me, ſin that it may be no bette,
For Jeſus love, and for the love of me.
Wilt thou than go thy way therwith? quod ſhe.
Ya certes, lemman, quod this Abſolon.
Than make thee redy, (quod ſhe) I come anon.
This Abſolon doun ſet him on his knees,
And ſaide; I am a lord at all degrees:

For after this I hope ther cometh more;
Lemman, thy grace, and, ſwete bird, thyn ore.
The window ſhe undoth, and that in haſte.
Have don, (quod ſhe) come of, and ſpede thee faſte,
Leſt that our neigheboures thee eſpie.
This Abſolon gan wipe his mouth ful drie.
Derke was the night, as pitch or as the cole,
And at the window ſhe put out hire hole,
And Abſolon him felle ne bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiſt hire naked ers
Ful ſavorly, er he was ware of this.
Abak he ſterte, and thought it was amis,
For wel he wiſt a woman hath no berd.
He felt a thing all rowe, and long yherd,
And ſaide; fy, alas! what have I do?
Te he, quod ſhe, and clapt the window to;
And Abſolon goth forth a ſory pas.
A berd, a berd, ſaid hendy Nicholas;
By goddes *corpus*, this goth faire and wel.
This ſely Abſolon herd every del,
And on his lippe he gan for anger bite;
And to himſelf he ſaid, I ſhal thee quite.
Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes
With duſt, with ſond, with ſtraw, with cloth, with chippes,
But Abſolon? that ſaith full oft, alas!
My ſoule betake I unto Sathanas,

But me were lever than all this toun (quod he)
Of this deſpit awroken for to be.
Alas! alas! that I ne had yblent.
His hote love is cold, and all yqueint.
For fro that time that he had kiſt hire ers,
Of paramours ne raught he not a kers,
For he was heled of his maladie;
Ful often paramours he gan defie,
And wepe as doth a child that is ybete.
A ſofte pas he went him over the ſtrete
Until a ſmith, men callen dan Gerveis,
That in his forge ſmithed plow-harneis;
He ſharpeth ſhare and cultre beſily.
This Abſolon knocketh all eſily,
And ſaid; Undo, Gerveis, and that anon.
What, who art thou? It am I Abſolon.
What? Abſolon, what? Criſtes ſwete tre,
Why riſe ye ſo rath? ey *benedicite*,
What eileth you? ſome gay girle, God it wote,
Hath brought you thus upon the viretote:
By Seint Neote, ye wote wel what I mene.
This Abſolon ne raughte not a bene
Of all his play; no word again he yaf.
He hadde more tawe on his diſtaf
Than Gerveis knew, and ſaide; Frend ſo dere,
That hote culter in the cheminee here

As lene it me, I have therwith to don:
I wol it bring again to thee ful ſone.
Gerveis anſwered; Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles all untold,
Thou ſhuldeſt it have, as I am trewe ſmith.
Ey, Criſtes foot, what wol ye don therwith?
Therof, quod Abſolon, be as be may;
I ſhal wel tellen thee another day:
And caught the culter by the colde ſtele.
Ful ſoft out at the dore he gan to ſtele,
And went unto the carpenteres wall.
He coughed firſt, and knocked therwithall
Upon the window, right as he did er.
This Aliſon anſwered; Who is ther
That knocketh ſo? I warrant him a thefe.
Nay, nay, (quod he) God wot, my ſwete lefe,
I am thin Abſolon, thy dereling.
Of gold (quod he) I have thee brought a ring,
My mother yave it me, ſo God me ſave,
Ful fine it is, and therto wel ygrave:
This wol I yeven thee, if thou me kiſſe.
This Nicholas was riſen for to piſſe,
And thought he wolde amenden all the jape,
He ſhulde kiſſe his ers er that he ſcape:
And up the window did he haſtily,
And out his ers he putteth prively

Over the buttok, to the hanche bon.
And therwith ſpake this clerk, this Abſolon,
Speke ſwere bird, I n'ot not wher thou art.
This Nicholas anon let fleen a fart,
As gret as it had ben a thonder dint,
That with the ſtroke he was wel nie yblint:
And he was redy with his yren hote,
And Nicholas amid the ers he ſmote.
Off goth the ſkinne an hondbrede al aboute.
The hote culter brenned ſo his toute,
That for the ſmert he wened for to die;
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crie,
Help, water, water, help for Goddes herte.
This carpenter out of his ſlomber ſterte,
And herd on crie water, as he were wood,
And thought, alas, now cometh Noes flood.
He ſet him up withouten wordes mo,
And with his axe he ſmote the cord atwo;
And doun goth all; he fond neyther to ſelle
Ne breed ne ale, til he came to the ſelle,
Upon the flore, and ther aſwoune he lay.
Up ſterten Aliſon and Nicholay,
And crieden, out and harow! in the ſtrete.
The neigheboures bothe ſmale and grete
In rannen, for to gauren on this man,
That yet aſwoune lay, bothe pale and wan:

For with the fall he broſten hath his arm.
But ſtonden he muſt unto his owen harm,
For whan he ſpake, he was anon bore doun
With hendy Nicholas and Aliſoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agaſte ſo of Noes flood
Thurgh fantaſie, that of his vanitee
He had ybought him kneding tubbes three,
And had hem honged in the roof above;
And that he praied hem for Goddes love
To ſitten in the roof *par compagnie*.
The folk gan laughen at his fantaſie.
Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
And turned all his harm into a jape.
For what ſo that this carpenter anſwerd,
It was for nought, no man his reſon herd.
With othes gret he was ſo ſworne adoun,
That he was holden wood in all the toun.
For everich clerk anon right held with other;
They ſaid, the man was wood, my leve brother;
And every wight gan laughen at this ſtrif.
Thus ſwived was the carpenteres wif,
For all his keping, and his jalouſie;
And Abſolon hath kiſt hire nether eye;
And Nicholas is ſcalded in the toute.
This tale is don, and God ſave all the route.

THE REVES PROLOGUE.

v. 3853—3872

Whan folk han laughed at this nice cas
Of Abſolon and hendy Nicholas,
Diverſe folk diverſely they ſaide,
But for the more part they lought and plaide;
Ne at this tale I ſaw no man him greve,
But it were only Oſewold the Reve.
Becauſe he was of carpenteres craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grutch and blamen it a lite.
So the ik, quod he, ful wel coude I him quite
With blering of a proude milleres eye,
If that me liſt to ſpeke of ribaudrie.
But ik am olde; me liſt not play for age;
Gras time is don, my foddre is now forage.
This white top writeth min olde yeres;
Min herte is alſo mouled as min heres;
But if I fare as doth an open-ers;
That ilke fruit is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be roten in mullok, or in ſtre.
We olde men, I drede, ſo faren we,

Til we be roten, can we not be ripe;
We hoppe alway, while that the world wol pipe;
For in our will ther ſtiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hore hed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leke; for though our might be gon,
Our will deſireth folly ever in on:
For whan we may not don, than wol we ſpeken,
Yet in our aſhen cold is fire yreken.
Foure gledes han we, which I ſhal deviſe,
Avaunting, lying, anger, and covetiſe.
Theſe foure ſparkes longen unto elde.
Our olde limes mow wel ben unwelde,
But will ne ſhal not faillen, that is ſothe.
And yet have I alway a coltes tothe,
As many a yere as it is paſſed henne,
Sin that my tappe of lif began to renne.
For ſikerly, whan I was borne, anon
Deth drow the tappe of lif, and let it gon:
And ever ſith hath ſo the tappe yronne,
Til that almoſt all empty is the tonne.
The ſtreme of lif now droppeth on the chimbe.
The ſely tonge may wel ringe and chimbe
Of wretchedneſſe, that paſſed is ful yore:
With olde folk, ſave dotage, is no more.
Whan that our Hoſte had herd this ſermoning,
He gan to ſpeke as lordly as a king,

And ſayde; What amounteth all this wit?
What? ſhall we ſpeke all day of holy writ?
The divel made a Reve for to preche,
Or of a ſouter a ſhipman, or a leche.
Say forth thy tale, and tary not the time:
Lo Depeford, and it is half way prime:
Lo Grenewich, ther many a ſhrew is inne.
It were al time thy tale to beginne.
Now, ſires, quod this Oſewold the Reve,
I pray you alle, that ye not you greve,
Though I anſwere, and ſomdel ſet his howve,
For leful is with force force off to ſhowve.
This dronken Miller hath ytold us here,
How that begiled was a carpentere,
Paraventure in ſcorne, for I am on:
And by your leve, I ſhal him quite anon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I ſpeke.
I pray to God his necke mote to-breke.
He can wel in min eye ſeen a ſtalk,
But in his owen he cannot ſeen a balk.

THE REVES TALE.

v. 3919—3938

At Trompington, not fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther ſtont a melle:
And this is veray ſothe, that I you telle.
A miller was ther dwelling many a day,
As any peacok he was proudé and gay:
Pipen he coude, and fiſhe, and nettes bete,
And turnen cuppes, and wraſtlen wel, and ſhete.
Ay by his belt hè bare a long pavade,
And of a ſwerd ful trenchant was the blade.
A joly popper bare he in his pouche;
Ther n'as no man for peril dorſt him touche.
A Shefeld thwitel bare he in his hoſe.
Round was his face, and camuſe was his noſe.
As pilled as an ape was his ſkull.
He was a market-beter at the full.
Ther dorſte no wight hond upon him legge,
That he ne ſwore he ſhuld anon abegge.
A thefe he was forſoth, of corn and mele,
And that a ſlie, and uſant for to ſtele.

His name was hoten deinous Simekin.
A wif he hadde, comen of noble kin:
The perſon of the toun hire father was.
With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that Simkin ſhuld in his blood allie.
She was yfoſtered in a nonnerie:
For Simkin wolde no wif, as he ſayde,
But ſhe were wel ynouriſhed, and a mayde,
To ſaven his eſtat of yemanrie:
And ſhe was proud, and pert as is a pie.
A ful faire ſight was it upon hem two.
On holy dayes beforne hire wold he go
With his tipet ybounde about his hed;
And ſhe came after in a gite of red,
And Simkin hadde hoſen of the ſame.
Ther dorſte no wight clepen hire but dame:
Was non ſo hardy, that went by the way,
That with hire dorſte rage or ones play,
But if he wold be ſlain of Simekin
With pavade, or with knif, or bodekin.
(For jalous folk ben perilous evermo:
Algate they wold hir wives wenden ſo.)
And eke for ſhe was ſomdel ſmoterlich,
She was as digne as water in a dich,
And al ſo ful of hoker, and of biſmare.
Hire thoughte that a ladie ſhuld hire ſpare,

What for hire kinrede, and hire nortelrie,
That ſhe had lerned in the nonnerie.
A doughter hadden they betwix hem two
Of twenty yere, withouten any mo,
Saving a child that was of half yere age,
In cradle it lay, and was a propre page.
This wenche thicke and wel ygrowen was,
With camuſe noſe, and eyen grey as glas;
With buttokes brode, and breſtes round and hie;
But right faire was hire here, I wol nat lie.
The perſon of the toun, for ſhe was faire,
In purpos was to maken hire his haire
Both of his catel, and of his meſuage,
And ſtrange he made it of hire mariage.
His purpos was for to beſtowe hire hie
Into ſom worthy blood of anceſtrie.
For holy chirches good mote ben deſpended
On holy chirches blood that is deſcended.
Therfore he wolde his holy-blood honoure,
Though that he holy chirche ſhuld devoure.
Gret ſoken hath this miller out of doute
With whete and malt, of all the land aboute;
And namely ther was a gret college
Men clepe the Soler hall at Cantebrege,
Ther was hir whete and eke hir malt yground.
And on a day it happed in a ſtound,

Sike lay the manciple on a maladie,
Men wenden wifly that he ſhulde die.
For which this miller ſtale both mele and corn
An hundred times more than beforn.
For therbeforn he ſtale but curteifly,
But now he was a thefe outrageoufly.
For which the wardein chidde and made fare,
But therof ſet the miller not a tare;
He craked boſt, and ſwore it n'as not ſo.

Than were ther yonge poure ſcoleres two,
That dwelten in the halle of which I ſay;
Teſtif they were, and luſty for to play;
And only for hir mirth and revelrie
Upon the wardein befily they crie,
To yeve hem leve but a litel ſtound,
To gon to mille, and ſeen hir corn yground:
And hardily they dorſten lay hir necke,
The miller ſhuld not ſtele hem half a pecke
Of corn by ſleighte, ne by force hem reve.

And at the laſt the wardein yave hem leve:
John highte that on, and Alein highte that other,
Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,
Fer in the North, I can not tellen where.

This Alein maketh redy all his gere,
And on a hors the ſak he caſt anon:
Forth goth Alein the clerk, and alſo John,

With good ſwerd and with bokeler by hir ſide.
John knew the way, him neded not no guide,
And at the mille the ſak adoun he laith.
Alein ſpake firſt; All haile, Simond, in faith,
How fares thy faire doughter, and thy wif?
Alein, welcome (quod Simkin) by my lif,
And John alſo: how now, what do ye here?
By God, Simond, (quod John) nede has no pere.
Him behoves ſerve himſelf that has na ſwain,
Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes ſain.
Our manciple I hope he wol be ded,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his hed:
And therfore is I come, and eke Alein,
To grind our corn and cary it hame agein:
I pray you ſpede us henen that ye may.
It ſhal be don (quod Simkin) by my fay.
What wol ye don while that it is in hand?
By God, right by the hopper wol I ſtand,
(Quod John) and ſeen how that the corn gas in.
Yet ſaw I never by my fader kin,
How that the hopper wagges til and fra.
Alein anſwered; John, and wolt thou ſwa?
Than wol I be benethe by my croun,
And ſee how that the mele falles adoun
In til the trogh, that ſhal be my diſport:
For, John, in faith I may ben of your ſort;

I is as ill a miller as is ye.
This miller ſmiled at hir nicetee,
And thought, all this n'is don but for a wile.
They wenen that no man may hem begile,
But by my thrift yet ſhal I blere hir eie,
For all the ſleighte in hir philoſophie.
The more queinte knakkes that they make,
The more wol I ſtele whan that I take.
In ſtede of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.
The greteſt clerkes ben not the wiſeſt men,
As whilom to the wolf thus ſpake the mare:
Of all hir art ne count I not a tare.
Out at the dore he goth ful prively,
Whan that he ſaw his time, ſoftely.
He loketh up and doun, til he hath found
The clerkes hors, ther as he ſtood ybound
Behind the mille, under a leveſell:
And to the hors he goth him faire and well,
And ſtripeth of the bridel right anon.
And whan the hors was laus, he gan to gon
Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,
And forth, with wehee, thurgh thick and thinne.
This miller goth again, no word he ſaid,
But doth his note, and with theſe clerkes plaid,
Till that hir corn was faire and wel yground.
And whan the mele is ſacked and ybound,

This John goth out, and fint his hors away,
And gan to crie, harow and wala wa!
Our hors is loſt: Alein, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet; come of, man, al at anes:
Alas! our wardein has his palfrey lorn.
This Alein al forgat both mele and corn;
Al was out of his mind his huſbandrie:
What, whilke way is he gon? he gan to crie.
The wif came leping inward at a renne,
She ſayd; Alas! youre hors goth to the fenne
With wilde mares, as faſt as he may go.
Unthank come on his hand that bond him ſo,
And he that better ſhuld have knit the rein.
Alas! (quod John) Alein, for Chriſtes pein
Lay doun thy ſwerd, and I ſhal min alſwa.
I is ful wight, God wate, as is a ra.
By Goddes ſaule he ſhal not ſcape us bathe.
Why ne had thou put the capel in the lathe?
Ill haile, Alein, by God thou is a fonne,
Theſe ſely clerkes han ful faſt yronne
Toward the fen, bothe Alein and eke John:
And whan the miller ſaw that they were gon,
He half a buſhel of hir flour hath take,
And bad his wif go knede it in a cake.
He ſayd; I trow, the clerkes were aferde.
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berde,

For all his art. Ye, let hem gon hir way.
Lo wher they gon. Ye, let the children play:
They get him not ſo lightly by my croun.
  Theſe ſely clerkes rennen up and doun
With kepe, kepe; ſtand, ſtand; joſſa, warderere.
Ga whiſtle thou, and I ſhal kepe him here.
But ſhortly, til that it was veray night
They coude not, though they did all hir might,
Hir capel catch, he ran alway ſo faſt:
Til in a diche they caught him at the laſt.
  Wery and wet, as beſtes in the rain,
Cometh ſely John, and with him cometh Alein.
Alas (quod John) the day that I was borne!
Now are we driven til hething and til ſcorne.
Our corn is ſtolne, men wol us fonnes calle,
Both the wardein, and eke our felawes alle,
And namely the miller, wala wa!
  Thus plaineth John, as he goth by the way
Toward the mille, and bayard in his hond.
The miller ſitting by the fire he fond,
For it was night, and forther might they nought,
But for the love of God they him beſought
Of herberwe and of eſe, as for hir peny.
  The miller ſaide agen, if ther be any,
Swiche as it is, yet ſhull ye have your part.
Myn hous is ſtreit, but ye have lerned art;

Ye can by arguments maken a place
A mile brode, of twenty foot of ſpace.
Let ſee now if this place may ſuffice,
Or make it roume with ſpeche, as is your giſe.
Now, Simond, (ſaid this John) by Seint Cuthberd
Ay is thou mery, and that is faire anſwerd.
I have herd ſay, man ſal take of twa thinges,
Slike as he findes, or ſlike as he bringes.
But ſpecially I pray thee, hoſte dere,
Gar us have mete and drinke, and make us chere,
And we ſal paien trewely at the full:
With empty hand, men may na haukes tull.
Lo here our ſilver redy for to ſpend.
This miller to the toun his doughter ſend
For ale and bred, and roſted hem a goos,
And bond hir hors, he ſhuld no more go loos:
And in his owen chambre hem made a bedde,
With ſhetes and with chalons faire yſpredde,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve:
His doughter had a bed all by hireſelve,
Right in the ſame chambre by and by:
It mighte be no bet, and cauſe why,
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.
They ſoupen, and they ſpeken of ſolace,
And drinken ever ſtrong ale at the beſt.
Abouten midnight wente they to reſt.

Wel hath this miller vernifhed his hed,
Ful pale he was, for-dronken, and nought red.
He yoxeth, and he fpeketh thurgh the nofe,
As he were on the quakke, or on the pofe.
To bed he goth, and with him goth his wif;
As any jay fhe light was and jolif,
So was hire joly whiftle wel ywette.
The cradel at hire beddes feet was fette,
To rocken, and to yeve the child to fouke.
And whan that dronken was all in the crouke
To bedde went the doughter right anon,
To bedde goth Alein, and alfo John.
Ther n'as no more; nedeth hem no dwale.
This miller hath fo wifly bibbed ale,
That as an hors he fnorteth in his flepe,
Ne of his tail behind he toke no kepe.
His wif bare him a burdon a ful ftrong;
Men might hir routing heren a furlong.
The wenche routeth eke *par compagnie*.

Alein the clerk that herd this melodie,
He poketh John, and fayde: Slepeft thou?
Herdeft thou ever flike a fong er now?
Lo whilke a complin is ymell hem alle.
A wilde fire upon hir bodies falle,
Wha herkned ever flike a ferly thing?
Ye, they fhall have the flour of yvel ending.

This lange night ther tides me no reſte.
But yet na force, all ſhal be for the beſte.
For, John, (ſayd he) as ever mote I thrive,
If that I may, yon wenche wol I ſwive.
Som eſement has lawe yſhapen us.
For, John, ther is a lawe that ſaieth thus,
That if a man in o point be agreved,
That in another he ſhal be releved.
Our corn is ſtolne, ſothly it is na nay,
And we han had an yvel fit to-day.
And ſin I ſhal have nan amendement
Again my loſſe, I wol have an eſement:
By Goddes ſaule, it ſhal nan other be.

This John anſwered; Alein, aviſe thee:
The miller is a perilous man, he ſayde.
And if that he out of his ſlepe abraide,
He mighte don us bathe a vilanie.
Alein anſwered; I count him nat a flie.
And up he riſt, and by the wenche he crept.
This wenche lay upright, and faſte ſlept,
Til he ſo nigh was, er ſhe might eſpie,
That it had ben to late for to crie:
And ſhortly for to ſay, they were at on.
Now play, Alein, for I wol ſpeke of John.

This John lith ſtill a furlong way or two,
And to himſelf he maketh routh and wo.

Alas! (quod he) this is a wicked jape;
Now may I ſay, that I is but an ape.
Yet has my felaw ſomwhat for his harme;
He has the millers doughter in his arme:
He auntred him, and hath his nedes ſpedde,
And I lie as a draf-ſak in my bedde;
And whan this jape is tald another day,
I ſhal be halden a daffe or a cokenay:
I wol ariſe, and auntre it by my fay:
Unhardy is unſely, thus men ſay.

And up he roſe, and ſoftely he went
Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hent,
And bare it ſoft unto his beddes fete.
Sone after this the wif hire routing lete,
And gan awake, and went hire out to piſſe,
And came again, and gan the cradel miſſe,
And groped here and ther, but ſhe fond non.
Alas! (quod ſhe) I had almoſt miſgon.
I had almoſt gon to the clerkes bedde.
Ey *benedicite*, than had I foule yſpedde.
And forth ſhe goth, til ſhe the cradel fond.
She gropeth alway forther with hire hond,
And fond the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
Becauſe that the cradel by it ſtood,
And n'iſte wher ſhe was, for it was derk,
But faire and wel ſhe crept in by the clerk,

And lith ful ſtill, and wold han caught a ſlepe.
Within a while this John the clerk up lepe,
And on this goode wif he laieth on ſore;
So mery a fit ne had ſhe nat ful yore.
He priketh hard and depe, as he were mad.
This joly lif han theſe two clerkes lad,
Til that the thridde cok began to ſing.
Alein wex werie in the morwening,
For he had ſwonken all the longe night,
And ſayd; Farewel, Malkin, my ſwete wight.
The day is come, I may no longer bide,
But evermo, wher ſo I go or ride,
I is thin awen clerk, ſo have I hele.
Now, dere lemman, quod ſhe, go farewele:
But or thou go, o thing I wol thee tell.
Whan that thou wendeſt homeward by the mell,
Right at the entree of the dore behind
Thou ſhalt a cake of half a buſhel find,
That was ymaked of thin owen mele,
Which that I halpe my fader for to ſtele.
And goode lemman, God thee ſave and kepe.
And with that word ſhe gan almoſt to wepe.
Alein upriſt and thought, er that it daw
I wol go crepen in by my felaw:
And fond the cradel at his hand anon.
By God, thought he, all wrang I have miſgon:

My hed is tottie of my ſwink to night,
That maketh me that I go nat aright.
I wot wel by the cradel I have miſgo;
Here lith the miller and his wif alſo.
And forth he goth a twenty divel way
Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
He wend have cropen by his felaw John,
And by the miller in he crept anon,
And caught him by the nekke, and gan him ſhake,
And ſayd; Thou John, thou ſwineſhed awake,
For Criſtes ſaule, and here a noble game:
For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
As I have thries as in this ſhort night
Swived the millers doughter bolt-upright,
While thou haſt as a coward ben agaſt.
Ye, falſe harlot, quod the miller, haſt?
A, falſe traitour, falſe clerk, (quod he)
Thou ſhalt be ded by Goddes dignitee,
Who dorſte be ſo bold to diſparage
My doughter, that is come of ſwiche linage.
And by the throte-bolle he caught Alein,
And he him hent deſpitouſly again,
And on the noſe he ſmote him with his fiſt;
Doun ran the blody ſtreme upon his breſt:
And in the flore with noſe and mouth to-broke
They walwe, as don two pigges in a poke.

And up they gon, and doun again anon,
Til that the miller ſporned at a ſton,
And doun he fell backward upon his wif,
That wiſte nothing of this nice ſtrif:
For ſhe was fall aſlepe a litel wight
With John the clerk, that waked had all night:
And with the fall out of hire ſlepe ſhe braide.
Helpe, holy crois of Bromeholme, (ſhe ſayde)
In manus tuas, Lord, to thee I call.
Awake, Simond, the fend is on me fall;
Myn herte is broken; helpe; I n'am but ded;
Ther lith on up my wombe and up myn hed.
Helpe, Simkin, for the falſe clerkes fight.
This John ſtert up as faſt as ever he might,
And graſpeth by the walles to and fro
To find a ſtaf, and ſhe ſtert up alſo,
And knew the eſtres bet than did this John,
And by the wall ſhe toke a ſtaf anon:
And ſaw a litel ſhemering of a light,
For at an hole in ſhone the mone bright,
And by that light ſhe ſaw hem bothe two,
But ſikerly ſhe n'iſte who was who,
But as ſhe ſaw a white thing in hire eye.
And whan ſhe gan this white thing eſpie,
She wend the clerk had wered a volupere;
And with the ſtaf ſhe drow ay nere and nere,

And wend han hit this Alein atte full,
And ſmote the miller on the pilled ſkull,
That doun he goth, and cried, harow! I die.
Thiſe clerkes bete him wel, and let him lie,
And greithen hem, and take hir hors anon,
And eke hir mele, and on hir way they gon:
And at the mille dore eke they toke hir cake
Of half a buſhel flour, ful wel ybake.

Thus is the proude miller wel ybete,
And hath yloſt the grinding of the whete,
And paied for the ſouper every del
Of Alein and of John, that bete him wel;
His wif is ſwived, and his doughter als;
Lo, ſwiche it is a miller to be fals.
And therfore this proverbe is ſayd ful ſoth,
Him thar not winnen wel that evil doth;
A gilour ſhal himſelf begiled be:
And God that ſiteth hie in mageſtee
Save all this compagnie, gret and ſmale.
Thus have I quit the miller in my tale.

THE COKES PROLOGUE.

v. 4323—4342

THE Coke of London, while the Reve ſpake,
For joye (him thought) he clawed him on the bak:
A ha (quod he) for Criſtes paſſion,
This miller had a ſharpe concluſion,
Upon this argument of herbergage.
Wel ſayde Salomon in his langage,
Ne bring not every man into thin hous,
For herberwing by night is perilous.
Wel ought a man aviſed for to be
Whom that he brought into his privetee.
I pray to God ſo yeve me forwe and care,
If ever, ſithen I highte Hodge of Ware,
Herd I a miller bet yſette a-werk;
He had a jape of malice in the derk.
But God forbede that we ſtinten here,
And therfore if ye vouchen ſauf to here
A tale of me that am a poure man,
I wol you tell as wel as ever I can
A litel jape that fell in our citee.
Our Hoſte anſwerd and ſayde; I grant it thee:

Now tell on, Roger, and loke that it be good,
For many a paſtee haſt thou letten blood,
And many a Jacke of Dover haſt thou ſold,
That hath been twies hot and twies cold.
Of many a pilgrim haſt thou Criſtes curſe,
For of thy perſelee yet fare they the werſe,
That they han eten in thy ſtoble goos:
For in thy ſhop goth many a flie loos.
Now tell on, gentil Roger by thy name,
But yet I pray thee be not wroth for game;
A man may ſay ful ſoth in game and play.
Thou ſayſt ful ſoth, quod Roger, by my fay;
But ſoth play *quade ſpel*, as the Fleming ſaith:
And therfore, Herry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, or we departen here,
Though that my tale be of an hoſtelere.
But natheles, I wol not telle it yet,
But er we part, ywis thou ſhalt be quit.
And therwithal he lough and made chere,
And ſayd his tale, as ye ſhul after here.

THE COKES TALE.

v. 4363—4382

A PRENTIS whilom dwelt in our citee,
And of a craft of vitaillers was he:
Gaillard he was, as goldfinch in the ſhawe,
Broune as a bery, a propre ſhort felawe:
With lokkes blake, kembed ful fetiſly.
Dancen he coude ſo wel and jolily,
That he was cleped Perkin Revelour.
He was as ful of love and paramour,
As is the hive ful of hony ſwete;
Wel was the wenche with him mighte mete.
At every bridale would he ſing and hoppe;
He loved bet the taverne than the ſhoppe.
For whan ther any riding was in Chepe,
Out of the ſhoppe thider wold he lepe,
And til that he had all the ſight yſein,
And danced wel, he wold not come agein;
And gadred him a meinie of his ſort,
To hoppe and ſing, and maken ſwiche diſport:
And ther they ſetten ſteven for to mete
To plaien at the dis in ſwiche a ſtrete.

For in the toun ne was ther no prentis,
That fairer coude caſte a pair of dis
Than Perkin coude, and therto he was fre
Of his diſpence, in place of privetee.
That fond his maiſter wel in his chaffare,
For often time he fond his box ful bare.

For ſothly, a prentis, a revelour,
That hanteth dis, riot and paramour,
His maiſter ſhal it in his ſhoppe abie,
Al have he no part of the minſtralcie.
For theft and riot they ben convertible,
Al can they play on giterne or ribible.
Revel and trouth, as in a low degree,
They ben ful wroth all day, as men may ſee.

This joly prentis with his maiſter abode,
Til he was neigh out of his prentiſhode;
Al were he ſnibbed bothe erly and late,
And ſomtime lad with revel to Newgate.
But at the laſt his maiſter him bethought
Upon a day, whan he his paper fought,
Of a proverbe, that ſaith this ſame word;
Wel bet is roten appel out of hord,
Than that it rote alle the remenant:
So fareth it by a riotous fervant;
It is wel laſſe harm to let him pace,
Than he ſhende all the fervants in the place.

Therfore his maiſter yaf him a quitance,
And bad him go, with ſorwe and with meſchance.
And thus this joly prentis had his leve:
Now let him riot all the night or leve.
And for ther n'is no thefe without a louke,
That helpeth him to waſten and to ſouke
Of that he briben can, or borwe may,
Anon he ſent his bed and his array
Unto a compere of his owen ſort,
That loved dis, and riot, and diſport;
And had a wif, that held for contenance
A ſhoppe, and ſwived for hire ſuſtenance.

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THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE.

v. 4421—4440

Our Hoſte ſaw wel, that the brighte ſonne
The ark of his artificial day had ronne
The fourthe part, and half an houre and more;
And though he were not depe expert in lore,
He wiſte it was the eighte and twenty day
Of April, that is meſſager to May;
And ſaw wel that the ſhadow of every tree
Was as in lengthe of the ſame quantitee
That was the body erect, that cauſed it;
And therfore by the ſhadow he toke his wit,
That Phebus, which that ſhone ſo clere and bright,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on hight;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clok, he gan conclude;
And ſodenly he plight his hors aboute.

Lordings, quod he, I warne you all this route,
The fourthe partie of this day is gon.
Now for the love of God and of Seint John
Leſeth no time, as ferforth as ye may.
Lordings, the time it waſteth night and day,

And ſteleth from us, what prively ſleping,
And what thurgh negligence in our waking,
As doth the ſtreme, that turneth never again,
Deſcending fro the montagne into a plain.
Wel can Senek and many a philoſophre
Bewailen time, more than gold in coffre.
For loſſe of catel may recovered be,
But loſſe of time ſhendeth us, quod he.
It wol not come again withouten drede,
No more than wol Malkins maidenhede,
Whan ſhe hath loſt it in hire wantonneſſe.
Let us not moulen thus in idleneſſe.
Sire man of Lawe, quod he, ſo have ye blis,
Tell us a tale anon, as forword is.
Ye ben ſubmitted thurgh your free aſſent
To ſtonde in this cas at my jugement.
Acquiteth you now, and holdeth your beheſt;
Than have ye don your devoir at the leſt.
Hoſte, quod he, *de par dieux jeo aſſente*,
To breken forword is not min entente.
Beheſt is dette, and I wold hold it fayn
All my beheſt, I can no better ſayn.
For ſwiche lawe as man yeveth another wight,
He ſhuld himſelven uſen it by right.
Thus wol our text: but natheles certain
I can right now no thrifty tale ſain,

But Chaucer (though he can but lewedly
On metres and on riming craftily)
Hath ſayd hem, in ſwiche Engliſh as he can,
Of olde time, as knoweth many a man.
And if he have not ſayd hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath ſayd hem in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
Mo than Ovide made of mentioun
In his *Epiſtolis*, that ben ful olde.
What ſhuld I tellen hem, ſin they ben tolde?
In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcyon,
And ſithen hath he ſpoke of everich on
Thiſe noble wives, and thiſe lovers eke.
Who ſo that wol his large volume ſeke
Cleped the ſeintes legende of Cupide:
Ther may he ſe the large woundes wide
Of Lucrece, and of Babylon Thiſbe;
The ſwerd of Dido for the falſe Enee;
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon;
The plaint of Deianire, and Hermion,
Of Adriane, and Yſiphilee;
The barreine ile ſtonding in the ſee;
The dreint Leandre for his fayre Hero;
The teres of Heleine, and eke the wo
Of Briſeide, and of Ladomia;
The crueltee of thee, quene Medea,

Thy litel children hanging by the hals,
For thy Jaſon, that was of love ſo fals.
O Hipermeſtra, Penelope, Alceſte,
Your wifhood he commendeth with the beſte.
But certainly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wicke enſample of Canace,
That loved hire owen brother ſinfully;
(Of all ſwiche curſed ſtories I ſay fy)
Or elles of Tyrius Appolonius,
How that the curſed king Antiochus
Beraft his doughter of hire maidenhede,
That is ſo horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hire threw upon the pavement.
And therfore he of ful aviſement
N'old never write in non of his ſermons
Of ſwiche unkinde abhominations;
Ne I wol non reherſe, if that I may.
But of my tale how ſhal I don this day?
Me were loth to be likened douteles
To Muſes, that men clepe Pierides,
(*Metamorphoſeos* wote what I mene)
But natheles I recche not a bene,
Though I come after him with hawebake,
I ſpeke in proſe, and let him rimes make.
And with that word, he with a ſobre chere
Began his tale, and ſayde, as ye ſhull here.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

v. 4519—4537

O SCATHFUL harm, condition of poverte,
With thirſt, with cold, with hunger ſo confounded,
To aſken helpe thee ſhameth in thin herte,
If thou non aſk, ſo ſore art thou ywounded,
That veray nede unwrappeth al thy wound hid.
Maugre thin hed thou muſt for indigence
Or ſtele, or begge, or borwe thy diſpence.

Thou blameſt Criſt, and ſayſt ful bitterly,
He miſdeparteth richeſſe temporal;
Thy neighebour thou witeſt ſinfully,
And ſayſt, thou haſt a litel, and he hath all:
Parfay (ſayſt thou) ſomtime he reken ſhall,
Whan that his tayl ſhal brennen in the glede,
For he nought helpeth needful in hir nede.

Herken what is the ſentence of the wiſe,
Bet is to dien than have indigence.
Thy ſelve neighebour wol thee deſpiſe,
If thou be poure, farewel thy reverence.
Yet of the wiſe man take this ſentence,

Alle the dayes of poure men ben wicke,
Beware therfore or thou come to that pricke.

If thou be poure, thy brother hateth thee,
And all thy frendes fleen fro thee, alas!
O riche marchants, ful of welé ben ye,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas,
Your bagges ben not filled with ambes as,
But with ſis cink, that renneth for your chance;
At Criſtenmaſſe mery may ye dance.

Ye ſeken lond and ſee for your winninges,
As wiſe folk ye knowen all th'eſtat
Of regnes, ye ben fathers of tidinges,
And tales, both of pees and of debat:
I were right now of tales deſolat,
N'ere that a marchant, gon in many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which that ye ſhull here.

In Surrie whilom dwelt a compagnie
Of chapmen rich, and therto ſad and trewe,
That wide where ſenten hir ſpicerie,
Clothes of gold, and ſatins riche of hewe.
Hir chaffare was ſo thriftly and ſo newe,
That every wight hath deintee to chaffare
With hem, and eke to ſellen hem hir ware.

Now fell it, that the maiſters of that ſort
Han ſhapen hem to Rome for to wende,
Were it for chapmanhood or for diſport,
Non other meſſage wold they thider ſende,
But comen hemſelf to Rome, this is the ende:
And in ſwiche place as thought hem avantage
For hir entente, they taken hir herbergage.

Sojourned han theſe marchants in that toun
A certain time, as fell to hir pleſance:
And ſo befell, that the excellent renoun
Of the emperoures doughter dame Cuſtance
Reported was, with every circumſtance,
Unto theſe Surrien marchants, in ſwiche wiſe
Fro day to day, as I ſhal you deviſe,

This was the commun vois of every man:
Our emperour of Rome, God him ſe,
A doughter hath, that ſin the world began,
To reken as wel hire goodneſſe as beaute,
N'as never ſwiche another as is ſhe:
I pray to God in honour hire ſuſtene,
And wold ſhe were of all Europe the quene.

In hire is high beaute withouten pride,
Youthe, withouten grenehed or folie:

To all hire werkes vertue is hire guide;
Humbleſſe hath ſlaien in hire tyrannie:
She is mirrour of alle curteſie,
Hire herte is veray chambre of holineſſe,
Hire hond miniſtre of fredom for almeſſe.

And al this vois was ſoth, as God is trewe,
But now to purpos let us turne agein.
Theſe marchants han don fraught hir ſhippes newe,
And whan they han this blisful maiden ſein,
Home to Surrie ben they went ful fayn,
And don hir nedes, as they han don yore,
And liven in wele, I can ſay you no more.

Now fell it, that theſe marchants ſtood in grace
Of him that was the Soudan of Surrie:
For whan they came from any ſtrange place
He wold of his benigne curteſie
Make hem good chere, and beſily eſpie
Tidings of ſundry regnes, for to lere
The wonders that they mighte ſeen or here.

Amonges other thinges ſpecially
Thëſe marchants han him told of dame Cuſtance
So gret nobleſſe, in erneſt ſeriouſly,
That this Soudan hath caught ſo gret pleſance

To han hire figure in his remembrance,
That all his luſt, and all his beſy cure
Was for to love hire, while his lif may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large book,
Which that men clepe the heven, ywriten was
With ſterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love ſhuld han his deth, alas!
For in the ſterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God wot, who ſo coud it rede,
The deth of every man withouten drede.

In ſterres many a winter therbeforn
Was writ the deth of Hector, Achilles,
Of Pompey, Julius, or they were born;
The ſtrif of Thebes; and of Hercules,
Of Sampſon, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes ben ſo dull,
That no wight can wel rede it at the full.

This Soudan for his prive councel ſent,
And ſhortly of this matere for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entent,
And ſayd hem certain, but he might have grace
To han Cuſtance, within a litel ſpace,

He n'as but ded, and charged hem in hie
To ſhapen for his lif ſom remedie.

Diverſe men, diverſe thinges ſaiden;
They argumentes caſten up and doun;
Many a ſubtil reſon forth they laiden;
They ſpeken of magike, and abuſion;
But finally, as in concluſion,
They cannot ſeen in that non avantage,
Ne in non other way, ſave mariage.

Than ſaw they therin ſwiche difficultee
By way of reſon, for to ſpeke all plain,
Becauſe ther was ſwiche diverſitee
Betwene hir bothe lawes, that they ſayn,
They trowen that no criſten prince wold fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe ſwete,
That us was yeven by Mahound our prophete.

And he anſwered: Rather than I leſe
Cuſtance, I wol be criſtened douteles:
I mote ben hires, I may non other cheſe,
I pray you hold your arguments in pees,
Savëth my lif, and beth not reccheles
To geten hire that hath my lif in cure,
For in this wo I may not long endure.

What nedeth greter dilatation?
I ſay, by tretiſe and ambaſſatrie,
And by the popes mediation,
And all the chirche, and all the chevalrie,
That in deſtruction of Maumetrie,
And in encreſe of Criſtes lawe dere,
They ben accorded ſo as ye may here;

How that the Soudan and his baronage,
And all his lieges ſhuld ycriſtened be,
And he ſhal han Cuſtance in mariage,
And certain gold, I n'ot what quantitee,
And hereto finden ſuffiſant ſuretee.
The ſame accord is ſworne on eyther ſide;
Now, fair Cuſtance, almighty God thee gide.

Now wolden ſom men waiten, as I geſſe,
That I ſhuld tellen all the purveiance,
The which that the emperour of his nobleſſe
Hath ſhapen for his doughter dame Cuſtance.
Wel may men know that ſo gret ordinance
May no man tellen in a litel clauſe,
As was arraied for ſo high a cauſe.

Biſhopes ben ſhapen with hire for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, and knightes of renoun,

And other folk ynow, this is the end.
And notified is thurghout al the toun,
That every wight with gret devotioun
Shuld prayen Criſt, that he this mariage
Receive in gree, and ſpede this viage.

The day is comen of hire departing,
I ſay the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no longer tarying,
But forward they hem dreſſen all and ſome.
Cuſtance, that was with ſorwe all overcome,
Ful pale ariſt, and dreſſeth hire to wende,
For wel ſhe ſeth ther n'is non other ende.

Alas! what wonder is it though ſhe wept?
That ſhal be ſent to ſtraunge nation
Fro frendes, that ſo tendrely hire kept,
And to be bounde under ſubjection
Of on, ſhe knoweth not his condition.
Houſbondes ben all good, and han ben yore,
That knowen wives, I dare ſay no more.

Fader, (ſhe ſaid) thy wretched child Cuſtance,
Thy yonge doughter, foſtered up ſo ſoft,
And ye, my moder, my ſoveraine pleſance
Over all thing, (out taken Criſt on loft)

Cuſtance your child hire recommendeth oft
Unto your grace; for I ſhal to Surrie,
Ne ſhal I never ſeen you more with eye.

Alas! unto the Barbare nation
I muſte gon, ſin that it is your will:
But Criſt, that ſtarfe for our redemption,
So yeve me grace his heſtes to fulfill,
I wretched woman no force though I ſpill;
Women arn borne to thraldom and penance,
And to ben under mannes governance.

I trow at Troye whan Pirrus brake the wall,
Or Ilion brent, or Thebes the citee,
Ne at Rome for the harm thurgh Hanniball,
That Romans hath venqueſhed times three,
N'as herd ſwiche tendre weping for pitee,
As in the chambre was for hire parting,
But forth ſhe mote, wheder ſhe wepe or ſing.

O firſte moving cruel firmament,
With thy diurnal ſwegh that croudeſt ay,
And hurtleſt all from Eſt til Occident,
That naturally wold hold another way;
Thy crouding ſet the heven in ſwiche array

At the beginning of this fierce viage,
That cruel Mars hath ſlain this marriage.

Infortunat aſcendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helpeles fall, alas!
Out of his angle into the derkeſt hous.
O Mars, o Atyzar, as in this cas;
O feble Mone, unhappy ben thy pas,
Thou knitteſt thee ther thou art not received,
Ther thou were wel fro thennes art thou weived.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, alas!
Was ther no philoſophre in al thy toun?
Is no time bet than other in ſwiche cas?
Of viage is ther non electioun,
Namely to folk of high conditioun,
Nat whan a rote is of a birth yknowe?
Alas! we ben to lewed, or to ſlow.

To ſhip is brought this woful faire maid
Solempnely, with every circumſtance:
Now Jeſu Criſt be with you all, ſhe ſaid.
Ther n'is no more, but farewel fair Cuſtance.
She peineth hire to make good countenance,
And forth I let hire ſayle in this manere,
And turne I wol againe to my matere.

The mother of the Soudan, well of vices,
Eſpied hath hire ſones pleine entente,
How he wol lete his olde ſacrifices:
And right anon ſhe for her conſeil ſente,
And they ben comen, to know what ſhe mente,
And whan aſſembled was this folk in fere,
She ſet hire doun, and ſayd as ye ſhul here.

Lordes, (ſhe ſayd) ye knowen everich on,
How that my ſone in point is for to lete
The holy lawes of our Alkaron,
Yeven by Goddes meſſager Mahomete:
But on avow to grete God I hete,
The lif ſhal rather out of my body ſterte,
Than Mahometes lawe out of myn herte.

What ſhuld us tiden of this newe lawe
But thraldom to our bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to ben drawe,
For we reneied Mahound our creance?
But, lordes, wol ye maken aſſurance,
As I ſhal ſay, aſſenting to my lore?
And I ſhal make us ſauf for evermore.

They ſworen, and aſſented every man
To live with hire and die, and by hire ſtond:

And everich on, in the beſt wiſe he can,
To ſtrengthen hire ſhal all his frendes fond.
And ſhe hath this empriſe ytaken in hond,
Which ye ſhull heren that I ſhal deviſe,
And to hem all ſhe ſpake right in this wiſe.

We ſhul firſt feine us criſtendom to take;
Cold water ſhal not greve us but a lite:
And I ſhal ſwiche a feſte and revel make,
That, as I trow, I ſhal the Soudan quite.
For tho his wif be criſtened never ſo white,
She ſhal have nede to waſh away the rede,
Though ſhe a font of water with hire lede.

O Soudanneſſe, rote of iniquitee,
Virago thou Semyramee the ſecond,
O ſerpent under femininitee,
Like to the ſerpent depe in helle ybound:
O feined woman, all that may confound
Vertue and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as neſt of every vice.

O Sathan envious, ſin thilke day
That thou were chaſed from our heritage,
Wel knoweſt thou to woman the olde way.
Thou madeſt Eva bring us in ſervage,

Thou wolt fordon this criſten mariage:
Thin inſtrument ſo (wala wa the while!)
Makeſt thou of women whan thou wolt begile.

This Soudanneſſe, whom I thus blame and warrie,
Let prively hire conſeil gon hir way:
What ſhuld I in this tale longer tarie?
She rideth to the Soudan on a day,
And ſayd him, that ſhe wold reneie hire lay,
And criſtendom of preſtes hondes fong,
Repenting hire ſhe hethen was ſo long;

Beſeching him to don hire that honour,
That ſhe might han the criſten folk to feſt:
To pleſen hem I wol do my labour.
The Soudan ſaith, I wol don at your heſt,
And kneling, thanked hire of that requeſt;
So glad he was, he n'iſte not what to ſay,
She kiſt hire ſone, and home ſhe goth hire way.

Arrived ben theſe criſten folk to londe
In Surrie, with a gret ſolempne route,
And haſtily this Soudan ſent his ſonde,
Firſt to his mother, and all the regne aboute,
And ſayd, his wif was comen out of doute,

And praide hem for to riden again the quene,
The honour of his regne to ſuſtene.

Gret was the preſſe, and riche was th'array
Of Surriens and Romanes met in fere.
The mother of the Soudan riche and gay
Received hire with all ſo glad a chere,
As any mother might hire doughter dere:
And to the nexte citee ther beſide
A ſofte pas ſolempnely they ride.

Nought trow I, the triumph of Julius,
Of which that Lucan maketh ſwiche a boſt,
Was realler, or more curious,
Than was th'aſſemblee of this blisful hoſt:
Butte this ſcorpion, this wicked goſt,
The Soudanneſſe, for all hire flattering
Caſt under this ful mortally to ſting.

The Soudan cometh himſelf ſone after this
So really, that wonder is to tell:
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.
And thus in mirth and joye I let hem dwell.
The fruit of this matere is that I tell.
Whan time came, men thought it for the beſt
That revel ſtint, and men go to hir reſt.

The time come is, this olde Soudanneſſe
Ordeined hath the feſte of which I tolde,
And to the feſte criſten folk hem dreſſe
In general, ya bothe yonge and olde.
Ther may men feſt and realtee beholde,
And deintees mo than I can you deviſe,
But all to dere they bought it or they riſe.

O ſoden wo, that ever art ſucceſſour
To worldly blis, ſpreint is with bitterneſſe
Th' ende of the joye of our worldly labour:
Wo occupieth the fyn of our gladneſſe.
Herken this conſeil for thy ſikerneſſe:
Upon thy glade day have in thy minde
The unware wo of harm, that cometh behinde.

For ſhortly for to tellen at a word,
The Soudan and the criſten everich on
Ben all to-hewe, and ſtiked at the bord,
But it were only dame Cuſtance alone.
This olde Soudanneſſe, this curſed crone,
Hath with hire frendes don this curſed dede,
For ſhe hireſelf wold all the contree lede.

Ne ther was Surrien non that was converted,
That of the conſeil of the Soudan wot,

That he n'as all to-hewe, er he aſterted:
And Cuſtance han they taken anon fote-hot,
And in a ſhip all ſtereles (God wot)
They han hire ſet, and bidden hire lerne ſayle
Out of Surrie againward to Itaille.

A certain treſor that ſhe thither ladde,
And ſoth to ſayn, vitaille gret plentee,
They han hire yeven, and clothes eke ſhe hadde,
And forth ſhe ſayleth in the ſalte ſee:
O my Cuſtance, ful of benignitee,
O emperoures yonge doughter dere,
He that is lord of fortune be thy ſtere.

She bleſſeth hire, and with ful pitous vois
Unto the crois of Criſt thus ſayde ſhe.
O clere, o weleful auter, holy crois,
Red of the lambes blood ful of pitee,
That weſh the world fro the old iniquitee,
Me fro the fende, and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I ſhal drenchen in the depe.

Victorious tree protection of trewe,
That only worthy were for to bere
The king of heven, with his woundes newe,
The white lamb, that hurt was with a ſpere;

Flemer of fendes, out of him and here
On which thy limmes faithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and yeve me might my lif to amenden.

Yeres and dayes fleet this creature
Thurghout the ſee of Grece, unto the ſtraite
Of Maroc, as it was hire aventure:
On many a ſory mele now may ſhe baite,
After hire deth ful often may ſhe waite,
Or that the wilde waves wol hire drive
Unto the place ther as ſhe ſhal arive.

Men mighten aſken, why ſhe was not ſlain?
Eke at the feſte who might hire body ſave?
And I anſwer to that demand again,
Who ſaved Daniel in the horrible cave,
Ther every wight, ſave he, maſter or knave,
Was with the leon frette, or he afterte?
No wight but God, that he bare in his herte.

God liſt to ſhew his wonderful miracle
In hire, for we ſhuld ſeen his mighty werkes:
Criſt, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certain menes oft, as knowen clerkes,
Doth thing for certain ende, that ful derke is

To mannes wit, that for our ignorance
Ne can nat know his prudent purveiance.

Now ſith ſhe was not at the feſte yſlawe,
Who kepte hire fro the drenching in the ſee?
Who kepte Jonas in the fiſhes mawe,
Til he was ſpouted up at Ninivee?
Wel may men know, it was no wight but he
That kept the peple Ebraike fro drenching,
With drye feet thurghout the ſee paſſing.

Who bade the foure ſpirits of tempeſt,
That power han to anoyen lond and ſee,
Both north and ſouth, and alſo weſt and eſt,
Anoyen neyther ſee, ne lond, ne tree?
Sothly the commander of that was he
That fro the tempeſt ay this woman kepte,
As wel whan ſhe awoke as whan ſhe ſlepte.

Wher might this woman mete and drinke have?
Three yere and more, how laſteth hire vitaille?
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave
Or in deſert? no wight but Criſt *ſans faille*.
Five thouſand folk it was as gret marvaille
With loves five and fiſhes two to fede:
God ſent his foyſon at hire grete nede.

She driveth forth into our Ocean
Thurghout our wide ſee, til at the laſt
Under an hold, that nempnen I ne can,
Fer in Northumberlond, the wave hire caſt,
And in the ſand hire ſhip ſtiked ſo faſt,
That thennes wolde it not in all a tide:
The wille of Criſt was that ſhe ſhulde abide.

The conſtable of the caſtle doun is fare
To ſeen this wrecke, and al the ſhip he ſought,
And fond this wery woman ful of care;
He fond alſo the treſour that ſhe brought:
In hire langage mercy ſhe beſought,
The lif out of hire body for to twinne,
Hire to deliver of wo that ſhe was inne.

A maner Latin corrupt was hire ſpeche,
But algate therby was ſhe underſtonde.
The conſtable, whan him liſt no lenger ſeche,
This woful woman brought he to the londe.
She kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes ſonde;
But what ſhe was, ſhe wolde no man ſeye
For foule ne faire, though that ſhe ſhulde deye.

She ſaid, ſhe was ſo maſed in the ſee,
That ſhe forgate hire minde, by hire trouth.

The conſtable hath of hir ſo gret pitee
And eke his wif, that they wepen for routh:
She was ſo diligent withouten ſlouth
To ſerve and pleſen everich in that place,
That all hire love, that loken in hire face.

The conſtable and dame Hermegild his wif
Were payenes, and that contree every wher;
But Hermegild loved Cuſtance as hire lif;
And Cuſtance hath ſo long ſojourned ther
In oriſons, with many a bitter tere,
Til Jeſu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegild, conſtableſſe of that place.

In all that lond no criſten dorſte route;
All criſten folk ben fled fro that contree
Thurgh payenes, that conquereden all aboute
The plages of the North by lond and ſee.
To Wales fled the criſtianitee
Of olde Bretons, dwelling in this ile;
Ther was hir refuge for the mene while.

But yet n'ere criſten Bretons ſo exiled,
That ther n'ere ſom which in hir privitee
Honoured Criſt, and hethen folk begiled;
And neigh the caſtle ſwiche ther dwelten three:

That on of hem was blind, and might not ſee,
But it were with thilke eyen of his minde,
With which men mowen ſee whan they ben blinde.

Bright was the ſonne, as in that ſommers day,
For which the conſtable and his wif alſo
And Cuſtance, han ytake the righte way
Toward the ſee, a furlong way or two,
To plaien, and to romen to and fro;
And in hir walk this blinde man they mette,
Croked and olde, with eyen faſt yſhette.

In the name of Criſt (cried this blinde Breton)
Dame Hermegild, yeve me my ſight again.
This lady wexe afraied of that ſoun,
Leſt that hire huſbond, ſhortly for to ſain,
Wold hire for Jeſu Criſtes love have ſlain,
Til Cuſtance made hire bold, and bad hire werche
The will of Criſt, as doughter of holy cherche.

The conſtable wexe abaſhed of that ſight,
And ſayde; What amounteth all this fare?
Cuſtance anſwerd; Sire, it is Criſtes might,
That helpeth folk out of the fendes ſnare:
And ſo ferforth ſhe gan our lay declare,

That ſhe the conſtable, er that it were eve,
Converted, and on Criſt made him beleve.

This conſtable was not lord of the place
Of which I ſpeke, ther as he Cuſtance fond,
But kept it ſtrongly many a winter ſpace,
Under Alla, king of Northumberlond,
That was ful wiſe, and worthy of his hond
Againe the Scottes, as men may wel here;
But tourne I wol againe to my matere.

Sathan, that ever us waiteth to begile,
Saw of Cuſtance all hire perfectioun,
And caſt anon how he might quite hire while,
And made a yonge knight, that dwelt in that toun,
Love hire ſo hote of foule affectioun,
That veraily him thought that he ſhuld ſpille,
But he of hire might ones han his wille.

He woeth hire, but it availeth nought,
She wolde do no ſinne by no wey:
And for deſpit, he compaſſed his thought
To maken hire on ſhameful deth to dey.
Hē waiteth whan the conſtable is away,
And prively upon a night he crepte
In Hermegildes chambre while ſhe ſlepte.

Wery, forwaked in hire oriſons,
Slepeth Cuſtance, and Hermegilde alſo.
This knight, thurgh Sathanas temptations,
All ſoftely is to the bed ygo,
And cut the throte of Hermegilde atwo,
And layd the blody knif by dame Cuſtance,
And went his way, ther God yeve him miſchance.

Sone after cometh this conſtable home again,
And eke Alla, that king was of that lond,
And ſaw his wife deſpitouſly yſlain,
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the blody knif he fond
By dame Cuſtance, alas! what might ſhe ſay?
For veray wo hire wit was all away.

To king Alla was told all this miſchance,
And eke the time, and wher, and in what wiſe,
That in a ſhip was fonden this Cuſtance,
As here before ye han herd me deviſe:
The kinges herte of pitee gan agriſe,
Whan he ſaw ſo benigne a creature
Falle in diſeſe and in miſaventure.

For as the lamb toward his deth is brought,
So ſtant this innocent beforn the king:

This falſe knight, that hath this treſon wrought,
Bereth hire in hond that ſhe hath don this thing:
But natheles ther was gret murmuring
Among the peple, and ſayn they cannot geſſe
That ſhe had don ſo gret a wickedneſſe.

For they han ſeen hire ever ſo vertuous,
And loving Hermegild right as hire lif:
Of this bare witneſſe everich in that hous,
Save he that Hermegild ſlow with his knif:
This gentil king hath caught a gret motif
Of this witneſs, and thought he wold enquere
Deper in this cas, trouthe for to lere.

Alas! Cuſtance, thou haſt no champion,
Ne fighten canſt thou not, ſo wala wa!
But he that ſtarf for our redemption,
And bond Sathan, and yet lith ther he lay,
So be thy ſtronge champion this day:
For but if Criſt on thee miracle kithe,
Withouten gilt thou ſhalt be ſlaine as ſwithe.

She ſet hire doun on knees, and thus ſhe ſayde;
Immortal God, that ſavedeſt Suſanne
Fro falſe blame, and thou merciful mayde,
Mary I mene, doughter to ſeint Anne,

Beforn whos child angels ſingen Oſanne,
If I be gilteles of this felonie,
My ſocour be, or elles ſhal I die.

Have ye not ſeen ſomtime a pale face
(Among a prees) of him that hath ben lad
Toward his deth, wher as he geteth no grace,
And ſwiche a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighten know him that was ſo beſtad,
Amonges all the faces in that route,
So ſtant Cuſtance, and loketh hire aboute.

O quenes living in proſperitee,
Ducheſſes, and ye ladies everich on,
Haveth ſom routhe on hire adverſitee;
An emperoures doughter ſtant alone;
She hath no wight to whom to make hire mone;
O blood real, that ſtondeſt in this drede,
Fer ben thy frendes in thy grete nede.

This Alla king hath ſwiche compaſſioun,
As gentil herte is fulfilled of pitee,
That fro his eyen ran the water doun.
Now haſtily do fecche a book, quod he;
And if this knight wol ſweren, how that ſhe

This woman ſlow, yet wol we us aviſe,
Whom that we wol that ſhal ben our juſtice.

A Breton book, written with Evangiles,
Was fet, and on this book he ſwore anon
She giltif was, and in the mene whiles
An hond him ſmote upon the nekke bone,
That doun he fell at ones as a ſtone:
And both his eyen broſt out of his face
In ſight of every body in that place.

A vois was herd, in general audience,
That ſayd; Thou haſt deſclandred gilteles
The doughter of holy chirche in high preſence;
Thus haſt thou don, and yet hold I my pees.
Of this mervaille agaſt was all the prees,
As maſed folk they ſtonden everich on
For drede of wreche, ſave Cuſtance alone.

Gret was the drede and eke the repentance
Of hem that hadden wronge ſuſpection
Upon this ſely innocent Cuſtance;
And for this miracle, in concluſion,
And by Cuſtances mediation,
The king, and many another in that place,
Converted was, thanked be Criſtes grace.

This falſe knight was ſlain for his untrouthe
By jugement of Alla haſtily;
And yet Cuſtance had of his deth gret routhe;
And after this Jeſus of his mercy
Made Alla wedden ful ſolempnely
This holy woman, that is ſo bright and ſhene,
And thus hath Criſt ymade Cuſtance a quene.

But who was woful (if I ſhal not lie)
Of this wedding but Donegild and no mo,
The kinges mother, ful of tyrannie?
Hire thoughte hire curſed herte braſt atwo;
She wolde not that hire ſone had do ſo;
Hire thoughte a deſpit, that he ſhulde take
So ſtrange a creature unto his make.

Me liſt not of the chaf ne of the ſtre
Maken ſo long a tale, as of the corn.
What ſhulde I tellen of the realtee
Of this mariage, or which cours goth beforn,
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
The fruit of every tale is for to ſay;
They ete and drinke, and dance, and ſing, and play.

They gon to bed, as it was ſkill and right,
For though that wives ben ful holy thinges,

They moſten take in patience a night
Swiche maner neceſſaries, as ben pleſinges
To folk that han ywedded hem with ringes,
And lay a lite hir holineſſe aſide
As for the time, it may no bet betide.

On hire he gat a knave childe anon,
And to a biſhop, and his conſtable eke
He toke his wif to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotland ward, his fomen for to ſeke.
Now faire Cuſtance, that is ſo humble and meke,
So long is gon with childe til that ſtill
She halt hire chambre, abiding Criſtes will.

The time is come, a knave child ſhe bere;
Mauricius at the fontſtone they him calle.
This conſtable doth forth come a meſſager,
And wrote unto his king that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tiding is befalle,
And other tidings ſpedeful for to ſay.
He hath the lettre, and forth he goth his way.

This meſſager, to don his avantage,
Unto the kinges mother rideth ſwithe,
And ſalueth hire ful faire in his langage.
Madame, quod he, ye may be glad and blithe,

And thanken God an hundred thouſand ſithe;
My lady quene hath child, withouten doute,
To joye and bliſſe of all this regne aboute.

Lo here the lettre ſeled of this thing,
That I moſt bere in all the haſt I may:
If ye wol ought unto your ſone the king,
I am your ſervant bothe night and day.
Donegilde anſwerd, As now at this time nay;
But here I wol all night thou take thy reſt,
To-morwe wol I ſay thee what me leſt.

This meſſager drank ſadly ale and wine,
And ſtolen were his lettres prively
Out of his box; while he ſlept as a ſwine;
And contrefeted was ful ſubtilly
Another lettre, wrought ful ſinfully,
Unto the king directe of this matere
Fro his conſtable, as ye ſhal after here.

This lettre ſpake, the quene delivered was
Of ſo horrible a fendliche creature,
That in the caſtle non ſo hardy was
That any while dorſte therein endure:
The mother was an elfe by aventure

Ycome, by charmes or by ſorcerie,
And everich man hateth hire compagnie.

Wo was this king whan he this lettre had ſein,
But to no wight he told his ſorwes ſore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again;
Welcome the ſonde of Criſt for evermore
To me, that am now lerned in this lore:
Lord, welcome be thy luſt and thy pleſance,
My luſt I put all in thyn ordinance.

Kepeth this child, al be it foule or faire,
And eke my wif, unto min home coming:
Criſt whan him liſt may ſenden me an heire,
More agreable than this to my liking.
This lettre he ſeled, prively weping,
Which to the meſſager was taken ſone,
And forth he goth, ther is no more to done.

O meſſager, fulfilled of dronkeneſſe,
Strong is thy breth, thy limmes faltren ay,
And thou bewreieſt alle ſecreneſſe;
Thy mind is lorne, thou jangleſt as a jay;
Thy face is tourned in a new array;
Ther dronkeneſſe regneth in any route,
Ther is no conſeil hid withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have non Engliſh digne
Unto thy malice, and thy tirannie:
And therfore to the fende I thee reſigne,
Let him enditen of thy traitorie.
Fy manniſh, fy; o nay by God I lie;
Fy fendliche ſpirit, for I dare wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy ſpirit is in helle.

This meſſager cometh fro the king again,
And at the kinges modres court he light,
And ſhe was of this meſſager ful fayn,
And pleſed him in all that ever ſhe might.
He dranke, and wel his girdel underpight;
He ſlepeth, and he ſnoreth in his giſe
All night, until the ſonne gan ariſe.

Eft were his lettres ſtolen everich on,
And contrefeted lettres in this wiſe.
The king commanded his conſtable anon
Up peine of hanging and of high jewiſe,
That he ne ſhulde ſoffren in no wiſe
Cuſtance within his regne for to abide
Three daies, and a quarter of a tide;

But in the ſame ſhip as he hire fond,
Hire and hire yonge ſone, and all hire gere

He ſhulde put, and croude hire fro the lond,
And charge hire, that ſhe never eft come there.
O my Cuſtance, wel may thy ghoſt have fere,
And ſleping in thy dreme ben in penance,
Whan Donegild caſt all this ordinance.

This meſſager on morwe whan he awoke,
Unto the caſtel halt the nexte way;
And to the conſtable he the lettre toke;
And whan that he this pitous lettre ſey,
Ful oft he ſayd alas, and wala wa;
Lord Criſt, quod he, how may this world endure?
So ful of ſinne is many a creature.

O mighty God, if that it be thy will,
Sin thou art rightful juge, how may it be
That thou wolt ſoffren innocence to ſpill,
And wicked folk regne in proſperitee?
A good Cuſtance, alas! ſo wo is me,
That I mote be thy turmentour, or dey
On ſhames deth, ther is non other wey.

Wepen both yong and old in al that place,
Whan that the king this curſed lettre ſent:
And Cuſtance with a dedly pale face
The fourthe day toward the ſhip ſhe went:

But natheles ſhe taketh in good entent
The will of Criſt, and kneling on the ſtrond
She ſayde, Lord, ay welcome be thy ſond.

He that me kepte fro the falſe blame,
While I was in the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe fro harme and eke fro ſhame
In the ſalt ſee, although I ſe not how:
As ſtrong as ever he was, he is yet now,
In him truſt I, and in his mother dere,
That is to me my ſail and eke my ſtere.

Hire litel child lay weping in hire arm,
And kneling pitouſly to him ſhe ſaid,
Pees, litel ſone, I wol do thee no harm:
With that hire couverchief of hire hed ſhe braid,
And over his litel eyen ſhe it laid,
And in hire arme ſhe lulleth it ful faſt,
And into the heven hire eyen up ſhe caſt.

Mother, quod ſhe, and mayden bright Marie,
Soth is, that thurgh womannes eggement
Mankind was lorne, and damned ay to die,
For which thy child was on a crois yrent:
Thy blisful eyen ſaw all his turment,

Than is ther no compariſon betwene
Thy wo, and any wo man may ſuſtene.

Thou ſaw thy child yſlain before thin eyen,
And yet now liveth my litel child parfay:
Now, lady bright, to whom all woful crien,
Thou glory of womanhed, thou faire may,
Thou haven of refute, bright ſterre of day,
Rew on my child, that of thy gentilleſſe
Reweſt on every rewful in diſtreſſe.

O litel child, alas! what is thy gilt,
That never wroughteſt ſinne as yet parde?
Why wol thin harde father have thee ſpilt?
O mercy, dere conſtable, (quod ſhe)
As let my litel child dwell here with thee:
And if thou darſt not ſaven him fro blame,
So kiſſe him ones in his fadres name.

Therwith ſhe loketh backward to the lond,
And ſaide; Farewel, houſbond routheles!
And up ſhe riſt, and walketh doun the ſtrond
Toward the ſhip, hire foloweth all the prees:
And ever ſhe praieth hire child to hold his pees,
And taketh hire leve, and with an holy entent
She bleſſeth hire, and into the ſhip ſhe went.

Vitailled was the ſhip, it is no drede,
Habundantly for hire a ful long ſpace:
And other neceſſaries that ſhuld nede
She had ynow, heried be Goddes grace:
For wind and wether, almighty God purchace,
And bring hire home, I can no better ſay,
But in the ſee ſhe driveth forth hire way.

Alla the king cometh home ſone after this
Unto his caſtel, of the which I told,
And aſketh wher his wif and his child is;
The conſtable gan about his herte cold,
And plainly all the matere he him told
As ye han herd, I can tell it no better,
And ſhewed the king his ſele and his letter;

And ſayde; Lord, as ye commanded me
Up peine of deth, ſo have I don certain.
This meſſager turmented was, til he
Moſte beknowe, and tellen plat and plain,
Fro night to night in what place he had lain:
And thus by wit and ſubtil enquering
Imagined was by whom this harm gan ſpring.

The hand was knowen that the lettre wrote,
And all the venime of this curſed dede;

But in what wife, certainly I n'ot.
The effect is this, that Alla out of drede
His moder flew, that moun men plainly rede,
For that fhe traitour was to hire ligeance:
Thus endeth this old Donegild with meſchance.

The ſorwe that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wif and for his child alſo,
Ther is no tonge that it tellen may.
But now wol I agen to Cuſtance go,
That fleteth in the ſee in peine and wo
Five yere and more, as liked Criſtes ſonde,
Or that hire ſhip approched to the londe.

Under an hethen caſtel at the laſt,
(Of which the name in my text I not find)
Cuſtance and eke hire child the ſee up caſt.
Almighty God, that ſaved all mankind,
Have on Cuſtance and on hire child ſom mind,
That fallen is in hethen hond eftſone
In point to ſpill, as I ſhal tell you ſone.

Doun fro the caſtel cometh ther many a wight
To gauren on this ſhip, and on Cuſtance:
But ſhortly fro the caſtel on a night,
The lordes ſteward (God yeve him meſchance)

A theef, that had reneyed our creance,
Came into the ſhip alone, and ſaid, he wolde
Hire lemman be, whether ſhe wolde or n'olde.

Wo was this wretched woman tho begon,
Hire childe cried, and ſhe cried pitouſly:
But blisful Mary halpe hire right anon,
For with hire ſtrogling wel and mightily
The theef fell over bord al ſodenly,
And in the ſee he drenched for vengeance,
And thus hath Criſt unwemmed kept Cuſtance.

O foule luſt of luxurie, lo thin ende,
Nat only that thou fainteſt mannes mind,
But veraily thou wolt his body ſhende.
Th'ende of thy werk, or of thy luſtes blind,
Is complaining: how many may men find,
That not for werk ſomtime, but for th'entent
To don this ſinne, ben other ſlain or ſhent.

How may this weke woman han the ſtrength
Hire to defend again this renegate?
O Golias, unmeſurable of length,
How mighte David maken thee ſo mate?
So yonge, and of armure ſo deſolate,

How dorſt he loke upon thy dredful face?
Wel may men ſeen it was but Goddes grace.

Who yaf Judith corage or hardineſſe
To ſleen him Holofernes in his tent,
And to deliver out of wretchedneſſe
The peple of God? I ſay for this entent,
That right as God ſpirit of vigour ſent
To hem, and ſaved hem out of meſchance,
So ſent he might and vigour to Cuſtance.

Forth goth hire ſhip thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltare and Septe, driving alway,
Somtime Weſt, and ſomtime North and South,
And ſomtime Eſt, ful many a wery day:
Til Criſtes moder (bleſſed be ſhe ay)
Hath ſhapen thurgh hire endeles goodneſſe
To make an end of all hire hevineſſe.

Now let us ſtint of Cuſtance but a throw,
And ſpeke we of the Romane emperour,
That out of Surrie hath by lettres knowe
The ſlaughter of criſten folk, and diſhonour
Don to his doughter by a falſe traitour,
I mene the curſed wicked Soudanneſſe,
That at the feſt let ſleen both more and leſſe.

For which this emperour hath ſent anon
His ſenatour, with real ordinance,
And other lordes, God wote, many on,
On Surriens to taken high vengeance:
They brennen, ſleen, and bring hem to meſchance
Ful many a day: but ſhortly this is th'ende,
Homward to Rome they ſhapen hem to wende.

This ſenatour repaireth with victorie
To Rome ward, ſayling ful really,
And met the ſhip driving, as ſaith the ſtorie,
In which Cuſtance ſitteth ful pitouſly:
Nothing ne knew he what ſhe was, ne why
She was in ſwiche array, ne ſhe wil ſey
Of hire eſtat, though that ſhe ſhulde dey.

He bringeth hire to Rome, and to his wif
He yaf hire, and hire yonge ſone alſo:
And with the ſenatour ſhe lad hire lif.
Thus can our lady bringen out of wo
Woful Cuſtance, and many another mo:
And longe time dwelled ſhe in that place,
In holy werkes ever, as was hire grace.

The ſenatoures wif hire aunte was,
But for all that ſhe knew hire never the more:

I wol no longer tarien in this cas,
But to king Alla, which I ſpake of yore,
That for his wif wepeth and ſiketh ſore,
I wol returne, and let I wol Cuſtance
Under the ſenatoures governance.

King Alla, which that had his moder ſlain,
Upon a day fell in ſwiche repentance,
That if I ſhortly tellen ſhal and plain,
To Rome he cometh to receive his penance,
And putte him in the popes ordinance
In high and low, and Jeſu Criſt beſought,
Foryeve his wicked werkes that he had wrought.

The fame anon thurghout the toun is born,
How Alla king ſhal come on pilgrimage,
By herbergeours that wenten him beforn,
For which the ſenatour, as was uſage,
Rode him againe, and many of his linage,
As wel to ſhewen his high magnificence,
As to don any king a reverence.

Gret chere doth this noble ſenatour
To king Alla, and he to him alſo;
Everich of hem doth other gret honour;
And ſo befell, that in a day or two

This ſenatour is to king Alla go
To feſt, and ſhortly, if I ſhal not lie,
Cuſtances ſone went in his compagnie.

Som men wold ſain at requeſte of Cuſtance
This ſenatour hath lad this child to feſte:
I may not tellen every circumſtance,
Be as be may, ther was he at the leſte:
But ſoth is this, that at his mothers heſte
Beforn Alla, during the metes ſpace,
The child ſtood, loking in the kinges face.

This Alla king hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the ſenatour he ſaid anon,
Whos is that faire child that ſtondeth yonder?
I n'ot, quod he, by God and by Seint John;
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
That I of wote: but ſhortly in a ſtound
He told Alla how that this child was found.

But God wot, quod this ſenatour alſo,
So vertuous a liver in all my lif
Ne ſaw I never, as ſhe, ne herd of mo
Of worldly woman, maiden, widewe or wif:
I dare wel ſayn hire hadde lever a knif

Thurghout hire breſt, than ben a woman wikke,
Ther is no man coude bring hire to that prikke.

Now was this child as like unto Cuſtance
As poſſible is a creature to be:
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Cuſtance, and theron muſed he,
If that the childes moder were aught ſhe
That is his wif, and prively he ſighte,
And ſped him fro the table that he mighte.

Parfay, thought he, fantome is in min hed.
I ought to deme of ſkilful jugement,
That in the ſalte ſee my wif is ded.
And afterward he made his argument;
What wot I, if that Criſt have hider ſent
My wif by ſee, as wel as he hire lent
To my contree, fro thennes that ſhe went?

And after noon home with the ſenatour
Goth Alla, for to ſee this wonder chance.
This ſenatour doth Alla gret honour,
And haſtily he ſent after Cuſtance:
But truſteth wel, hire luſte not to dance.
Whan that ſhe wiſte wherfore was that ſonde,
Unnethe upon hire feet ſhe mighte ſtonde.

Whan Alla ſaw his wif, faire he hire grette,
And wept, that it was routhe for to ſee,
For at the firſte look he on hire ſette
He knew wel verily that it was ſhe:
And ſhe for ſorwe, as domb ſtant as a tree:
So was hire herte ſhette in hire diſtreſſe,
Whan ſhe remembered his unkindeneſſe.

Twies ſhe ſwouneth in his owen ſight,
He wepeth and him excuſeth pitouſly:
Now God, quod he, and all his halwes bright
So wiſly on my ſoule as have mercy,
That of youre harme as gilteles am I,
As is Maurice my ſone, ſo like your face,
Elles the fend me fetche out of this place.

Long was the ſobbing and the bitter peine,
Or that hir woful hertes mighten ceſe,
Gret was the pitee for to here hem pleine,
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encreſe.
I pray you all my labour to releſe,
I may not tell hir wo until to-morwe,
I am ſo wery for to ſpeke of ſorwe.

But finally, whan that the ſoth is wiſt,
That Alla gilteles was of hire wo,

I trow an hundred times han they kiſt,
And ſwiche a bliſſe is ther betwix hem two,
That ſave the joye that laſteth evermo,
Ther is non like, that any creature
Hath ſeen or ſhal, while that the world may dure,

Tho praied ſhe hire huſbond mekely
In releef of hire longe pitous pine,
That he wold pray hire fader ſpecially,
That of his mageſtee he wold encline
To vouchesauf ſom day with him to dine:
She praied him eke, he ſhulde by no way
Unto hire fader no word of hire ſay.

Som men wold ſayn, how that the child Maurice
Doth this meſſage until this emperour:
But as I geſſe, Alla was not ſo nice,
To him that is ſo ſoveraine of honour,
As he that is of criſten folk the flour,
Send any child, but it is bet to deme
He went himſelf, and ſo it may wel ſeme.

This emperour hath granted gentilly
To come to dinner, as he him beſoughte:
And wel rede I, he loked beſily
Upon this child, and on his doughter thought.

Alla goth to his inne, and as him ought
Arraied for this feſte in every wiſe,
As ferforth as his conning may ſuffice.

The morwe came, and Alla gan him dreſſe,
And eke his wif, this emperour to mete:
And forth they ride in joye and in gladneſſe,
And whan ſhe ſaw hire fader in the ſtrete,
She light adoun and falleth him to fete.
Fader, quod ſhe, your yonge child Cuſtance
Is now ful clene out of your remembrance.

I am your doughter, your Cuſtance, quod ſhe,
That whilom ye han ſent into Surrie;
It am I, fader, that in the ſalte ſee
Was put alone, and dampned for to die.
Now, goode fader, I you mercy crie,
Send me no more into non hetheneſſe,
But thanketh my lord here of his kindeneſſe.

Who can the pitous joye tellen all
Betwix hem thre, ſin they ben thus ymette?
But of my tale make an ende I ſhal,
The day goth faſt, I wol no longer lette.
Thiſe glade folk to dinner ben yſette,

In joy and bliſſe at mete I let hem dwell,
A thouſand fold wel more than I can tell.

This child Maurice was ſithen emperour
Made by the pope, and lived criſtenly,
To Criſtes chirche did he gret honour:
But I let all his ſtorie paſſen by,
Of Cuſtance is my tale ſpecially,
In the olde Romane geſtes men may find
Maurices lif, I bere it not in mind.

This king Alla, whan he his time ſey,
With his Cuſtance, his holy wif ſo ſwete,
To Englond ben they come the righte wey,
Ther as they live in joye and in quiete.
But litel while it laſteth I you hete,
Joye of this world for time wol not abide,
Fro day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who lived ever in ſwiche delite o day,
That him ne meved other conſcience,
Or ire, or talent, or ſom kin affray,
Envie, or pride, or paſſion, or offence?
I ne ſay but for this end this ſentence,
That litel while in joye or in pleſance
Laſteth the bliſſe of Alla with Cuſtance.

For deth, that taketh of hie and low his rente,
Whan paſſed was a yere, even as I geſſe,
Out of this world this king Alla he hente,
For whom Cuſtance hath ful gret hevineſſe.
Now let us praien God his ſoule bleſſe:
And dame Cuſtance, finally to ſay,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hire way.

To Rome is come this holy creature,
And findeth ther hire frendes hole and ſound:
Now is ſhe ſcaped all hire aventure:
And whan that ſhe hire fader hath yfound,
Doun on hire knees falleth ſhe to ground,
Weping for tenderneſſe in herte blithe
She herieth God an hundred thouſand ſithe.

In vertue and in holy almeſſe dede
They liven alle, and never aſonder wende;
Till deth departeth hem, this lif they lede:
And fareth now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jeſu Criſt, that of his might may ſende
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,
And kepe us alle that ben in this place.

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.

v. 5583——5602

Experience, though non auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynough for me
To ſpeke of wo that is in mariage:
For, lordings, ſin I twelf yere was of age,
(Thanked be God that is eterne on live)
Huſbondes at chirche dore have I had five,
(If I ſo often might han wedded be)
And all were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was told, not longe time agon is,
That ſithen Criſt ne went never but onis
To wedding, in the Cane of Galilee,
That by that ilke enſample taught he me,
That I ne ſhulde wedded be but ones.
Lo, herke eke, which a ſharpe word for the nones,
Beſide a welle Jeſu, God and man,
Spake in reprefe of the Samaritan:
Thou haſt yhadde five huſbonds, ſayde he;
And thilke man, that now hath wedded thee,
Is not thyn huſbond: thus ſaid he certain;
What that he ment therby, I can not ſain.

But that I aſke, why that the fifthe man
Was non huſbond to the Samaritan?
How many might ſhe have in mariage?
Yet herd I never tellen in min age
Upon this noumbre diffinitioun;
Men may devine, and gloſen up and doun.

But wel I wot, expreſſe withouten lie
God bad us for to wex and multiplie;
That gentil text can I wel underſtond.
Eke wel I wot, he ſayd, that min huſbond
Shuld leve fader and moder, and take to me;
But of no noumbre mention made he,
Of bigamie or of octogamie;
Why ſhuld men than ſpeke of it vilanie?

Lo here the wiſe king Dan Salomon,
I trow he hadde wives mo than on,
(As wolde God it leful were to me
To be refreſhed half ſo oft as he)
Which a gift of God had he for alle his wives?
No man hath ſwiche, that in this world on live is.
God wot, this noble king, as to my witte,
The firſte night had many a mery fitte
With eche of hem, ſo wel was him on live.
Bleſſed be God that I have wedded five,
Welcome the ſixthe whan that ever he ſhall.
For ſith I wol not kepe me chaſte in all,

Whan min huſbond is fro the world ygon,
Som criſten man ſhal wedden me anon.
For than the apoſtle ſaith, that I am fre
To wedde, a' goddes half, wher it liketh me.
He ſaith, that to be wedded is no ſinne;
Better is to be wedded than to brinne.

What rekketh me though folk ſay vilanie
Of ſhrewed Lamech, and his bigamie?
I wot wel Abraham was an holy man,
And Jacob eke, as fer as ever I can,
And eche of hem had wives mo than two,
And many another holy man alſo.
Wher can ye ſeen in any maner age
That highe God defended mariage
By expreſſe word? I pray you telleth me,
Or wher commanded he virginitee?

I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
The apoſtle, whan he ſpake of maidenhede,
He ſaid, that precept therof had he non:
Men may conſeille a woman to ben on,
But conſeilling is no commandement;
He put it in our owen jugement.

For hadde God commanded maidenhede,
Than had he dampned wedding out of drede;
And certes, if ther were no ſede yſowe,
Virginitee than wherof ſhuld it growe?

Poule dorſte not commanden at the leſt
A thing, of which his maiſter yaf non heſt.
The dart is ſette up for virginitee,
Catch who ſo may, who renneth beſt let ſee.
But this word is not take of every wight,
But ther as God wol yeve it of his might.
I wot wel that the apoſtle was a maid,
But natheles, though that he wrote and ſaid,
He wold that every wight were ſwiche as he,
All n'is but conſeil to virginitee.
And for to ben a wif he yaf me leve,
Of indulgence, ſo n'is it non repreve
To wedden me, if that my make die,
Withoute exception of bigamie;
All were it good no woman for to touche,
(He ment as in his bed or in his couche)
For peril is both fire and tow to aſſemble;
Ye know what this enſample may reſemble.
This is all and ſom, he held virginitee
More parfit than wedding in freeltee:
(Freeltee clepe I, but if that he and ſhe
Wold lede hir lives all in chaſtitee)
I graunt it wel, I have of non envie,
Who maidenhed preferre to bigamie;
It liketh hem to be clene in body and goſt:
Of min eſtat I wol not maken boſt.

For wel ye know, a lord in his houſhold
Ne hath nat every veſſell all of gold:
Som ben of tree; and don hir lord ſervice.
God clepeth folk to him in ſondry wiſe,
And everich hath of God a propre gift,
Som this, ſom that, as that him liketh ſhift.
Virginitee is gret perfection,
And continence eke with devotion:
But Criſt, that of perfection is welle,
Ne bade not every wight he ſhulde go ſelle
All that he had, and yeve it to the poure,
And in ſwiche wiſe folow him and his lore:
He ſpake to hem that wold live parfitly,
And, lordings, (by your leve) that am nat I;
I wol beſtow the flour of all myn age
In th' actes and the fruit of mariage.
Tell me alſo, to what concluſion
Were membres made of generation,
And of ſo parfit wiſe a wight ywrought?
Truſteth me wel, they were nat made for nought.
Gloſe who ſo wol, and ſay bothe up and doun,
That they were made for purgatioun
Of urine, and of other thinges ſmale,
And eke to know a female from a male:
And for non other cauſe? ſay ye no?
The experience wot wel it is not ſo.

So that the clerkes be not with me wroth,
I ſay this, that they maked ben for both,
This is to ſayn, for office, and for eſe
Of engendrure, ther we not God diſpleſe.
Why ſhuld men elles in hir bookes ſette,
That man ſhal yelden to his wif hire dette?
Now wherwith ſhuld he make his payement,
If he ne uſed his ſely inſtrument?
Than were they made upon a creature
To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.
But I ſay not that every wight is hold,
That hath ſwiche harneis as I to you told,
To gon and uſen hem in engendrure;
Than ſhuld men take of chaſtitee no cure.
Criſt was a maide, and ſhapen as a man,
And many a ſeint, ſith that this world began,
Yet lived they ever in parfit chaſtitee.
I n'ill envie with no virginitee.
Let hem with bred of pured whete be fed,
And let us wives eten barly bred.
And yet with barly bred, Mark tellen can,
Our Lord Jeſu refreſhed many a man.
In ſwiche eſtat as God hath cleped us,
I wol perſever, I n'am not precious,
In wifhode wol I uſe min inſtrument
As frely as my maker hath it ſent.

If I be dangerous God yeve me ſorwe,
Min huſbond ſhal it have both even and morwe,
Whan that him liſt come forth and pay his dette.
An huſbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which ſhal be both my dettour and my thrall,
And have his tribulation withall
Upon his fleſh, while that I am his wif.
I have the power during all my lif
Upon his propre body, and nat he;
Right thus the apoſtle told it unto me,
And bad our huſbonds for to love us wel;
All this ſentence me liketh every del.

Up ſtert the pardoner, and that anon;
Now, dame, quod he, by God and by Seint John,
Ye ben a noble prechour in this cas.
I was about to wed a wif, alas!
What? ſhuld I bie it on my fleſh ſo dere?
Yet had I lever wed no wif to-yere.

Abide, quod ſhe, my tale is not begonne.
Nay, thou ſhalt drinken of another tonne
Er that I go, ſhal ſavour worſe than ale.
And whan that I have told thee forth my tale
Of tribulation in mariage,
Of which I am expert in all min age,
(This is to ſayn, myſelf hath ben the whippe)
Than maieſt thou cheſen wheder thou wolt ſippe

Of thilke tonne, that I ſhal abroche.
Beware of it, er thou to neigh approche.
For I ſhal tell enſamples mo than ten:
Who ſo that n'ill beware by other men
By him ſhal other men corrected be:
Thiſe ſame wordes writeth Ptholomee,
Rede in his Almageſte, and take it there.

Dame, I wold pray you, if your will it were,
Sayde this pardoner, as ye began,
Tell forth your tale, and ſpareth for no man,
And techeth us yonge men of your practike.

Gladly, quod ſhe, ſin that it may you like.
But that I pray to all this compagnie,
If that I ſpeke after my fantaſie,
As taketh not a greefe of that I ſay,
For min entente is not but for to play.

Now, ſires, than wol I tell you forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinken win or ale
I ſhal ſay ſoth, the huſbondes that I had
As three of hem were good, and two were bad.
The three were goode men and riche and olde.
Unethes mighten they the ſtatute holde,
In which that they were bounden unto me.
Ye wot wel what I mene of this parde.
As God me helpe, I laugh whan that I thinke,
How pitouſly a-night I made hem ſwinke,

But by my fay, I tolde of it no ſtore:
They had me yeven hir lond and hir treſore,
Me neded not do lenger diligence
To win hir love, or don hem reverence.
They loved me ſo wel by God above,
That I ne tolde no deintee of hir love.
A wiſe woman wol beſie hire ever in on
To geten hir love, ther as ſhe hath non.
But ſith I had hem holly in min hond,
And that they hadde yeven me all hir lond,
What ſhuld I taken kepe hem for to pleſe,
But it were for my profit, or min eſe?
I ſet hem ſo a-werke by my fay,
That many a night they ſongen wala wa.
The bacon was not fet for hem, I trow,
That ſom men have in Eſſex at Donmow.
I governed hem ſo wel after my lawe,
That eche of hem ful blisful was and fawe
To bringen me gay thinges fro the feyre.
They were ful glade whan I ſpake hem fayre,
For God it wot, I chidde hem ſpitouſly.
Now herkeneth how I bare me proprely.
Ye wiſe wives, that can underſtond,
Thus ſhul ye ſpeke, and bere hem wrong on hond,
For half ſo boldely can ther no man
Sweren and lien as a woman can.

(I ſay not this by wives that ben wiſe,
But if it be whan they hem miſaviſe.)
A wiſe wif if that ſhe can hire good,
Shal beren hem on hond the cow is wood,
And taken witneſſe of hire owen mayd
Of hir aſſent: but herkeneth how I ſayd.
Sire olde kaynard, is this thin aray?
Why is my neigheboures wif ſo gay?
She is honoured over al wher ſhe goth,
I ſit at home, I have no thrifty cloth.
What doſt thou at my neigheboures hous?
Is ſhe ſo faire? art thou ſo amorous?
What rowneſt thou with our maide? *benedicite*,
Sire olde lechour, let thy japes be.
And if I have a goſſib, or a frend,
(Withouten gilt) thou chideſt as a fend,
If that I walke or play unto his hous.
Thou comeſt home as dronken as a mous,
And precheſt on thy benche, with evil prefe:
Thou ſayſt to me, it is a gret meſchiefe
To wed a poure woman, for coſtage:
And if that ſhe be riche of high parage,
Than ſayſt thou, that it is a tourmentrie
To ſoffre hire pride and hire melancolie.
And if that ſhe be faire, thou veray knave,
Thou ſayſt that every holour wol hire have.

She may no while in chaſtitee abide,
That is aſſailled upon every ſide.
Thou ſayſt ſom folk deſire us for richeſſe,
Som for our ſhape, and ſom for our fairneſſe,
And ſom, for ſhe can other ſing or dance,
And ſom for gentilleſſe and daliance,
Som for hire hondes and hire armes ſmale:
Thus goth all to the devil by thy tale.
Thou ſayſt, men may not kepe a caſtel wal,
It may ſo long aſſailled be over al.
And if that ſhe be foul, thou ſayſt, that ſhe
Coveteth every man that ſhe may ſee;
For as a ſpaniel, ſhe wol on him lepe,
Til ſhe may finden ſom man hire to chepe.
Ne non ſo grey goos goth ther in the lake,
(As ſayſt thou) that wol ben withoute a make.
And ſayſt, it is an hard thing for to welde
A thing, that no man wol, his thankes, helde.
Thus ſayſt thou, lorel, whan thou goſt to bed,
And that no wiſe man nedeth for to wed,
Ne no man that entendeth unto heven.
With wilde thonder dint and firy leven
Mote thy welked nekke be to-broke.
Thou ſayſt, that dropping houſes, and eke ſmoke,
And chiding wives maken men to flee
Out of hir owen hous; a, *benedicite*,

What aileth ſwiche an old man for to chide?
Thou ſayſt, we wives wol our vices hide,
Til we be faſt, and than we wol hem ſhewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a ſhrewe.
Thou ſayſt, that oxen, aſſes, hors, and houndes,
They ben aſſaied at diverſe ſtoundes,
Baſines, lavoures, or that men hem bie,
Spones, ſtooles, and all ſwiche huſbondrie,
And ſo ben pottes, clothes, and aray,
But folk of wives maken non aſſay,
Til they ben wedded, olde dotard ſhrewe!
And than, ſayſt thou, we wol our vices ſhewe.
Thou ſayſt alſo, that it diſpleſeth me,
But if that thou wolt preiſen my beautee,
And but thou pore alway upon my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a feſte on thilke day
That I was borne, and make me freſh and gay;
And but thou do to my norice honour,
And to my chamberere within my bour,
And to my faders folk, and myn allies;
Thus ſayſt thou, olde barel ful of lies.
And yet alſo of our prentis Jankin,
For his criſpe here, ſhining as gold ſo fin,
And for he ſquiereth me both up and doun,
Yet haſt thou caught a falſe ſuſpection:

I wol him nat, though thou were ded to-morwe.
But tell me this, why hideſt thou with ſorwe
The keies of thy cheſt away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thin parde.
What, weneſt thou make an idiot of our dame?
Now by that Lord that cleped is Seint Jame,
Thou ſhalt nat bothe, though that thou were wood,
Be maiſter of my body and of my good,
That on thou ſhalt forgo maugre thin eyen.
What helpeth it of me to enquere and ſpien?
I trow thou woldeſt locke me in thy cheſte.
Thou ſhuldeſt ſay, Fayr wif, go wher thee leſte;
Take your diſport; I wol nat leve no tales;
I know you for a trewe wif, dame Ales.
We love no man, that taketh kepe or charge
Wher that we gon, we wol be at our large.
Of alle men ybleſſed mote he be
The wiſe aſtrologien Dan Ptholomee,
That ſayth this proverbe in his Almageſte:
Of alle men his wiſdom is higheſte,
That rekketh not who hath the world in hond.
By this proverbe thou ſhalt wel underſtond,
Have thou ynough, what thar thee rekke or care
How merily that other folkes fare?
For certes, olde dotard, by your leve,
Ye ſhullen have queint right ynough at eve.

He is to gret a nigard that wol werne
A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
He ſhal have never the leſſe light parde.
Have thou ynough, thee thar not plainen thee.
Thou ſayſt alſo, if that we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chaſtitee.
And yet, with ſorwe, thou enforceſt thee,
And ſayſt thiſe wordes in the apoſtles name:
In habit made with chaſtitee and ſhame
Ye women ſhul appareile you, (quod he)
And nat in treſſed here, and gay perrie,
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche
I wol not work as mochel as a gnat.
Thou ſayſt alſo, I walke out like a cat;
For who ſo wolde ſenge the cattes ſkin,
Than wol the cat wel dwellen in hire in;
And if the cattes ſkin be ſleke and gay,
She wol nat dwellen in hous half a day,
But forth ſhe wol, or any day be dawed,
To ſhew hire ſkin, and gon a caterwawed.
This is to ſay, if I be gay, ſire ſhrewe,
I wol renne out, my borel for to ſhewe.
Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to ſpien?
Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen

To be my wardecorps, as he can beſt,
In faith he ſhal not kepe me but me leſt:
Yet coude I make his berd, ſo mote I the.
Thou ſayeſt eke, that ther ben thinges three,
Which thinges gretly troublen all this erthe,
And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe:
O lefe ſire ſhrewe, Jeſu ſhort thy lif.
Yet precheſt thou, and ſayſt, an hateful wif
Yrekened is for on of thiſe meſchances.
Be ther non other maner reſemblances
That ye may liken your parables to,
But if a ſely wif be on of tho?
Thou likeneſt eke womans love to helle,
To barrein lond, ther water may not dwelle.
Thou likeneſt it alſo to wilde fire;
The more it brenneth, the more it hath deſire
To conſume every thing, that brent wol be.
Thou ſayeſt, right as wormes ſhende a tre,
Right ſo a wif deſtroieth hire huſbond;
This knowen they that ben to wives bond.
Lordings, right thus, as ye han underſtond,
Bare I ſtifly min old huſbondes on hond,
That thus they ſaiden in hir dronkenneſſe;
And all was falſe, but as I toke witneſſe
On Jankin, and upon my nece alſo.
O Lord, the peine I did hem, and the wo,

Ful gilteles, by Goddes ſwete pine;
For as an hors, I coude bite and whine;
I coude plain, and I was in the gilt,
Or elles oftentime I had ben ſpilt.
Who ſo firſt cometh to the mill, firſt grint;
I plained firſt, ſo was our werre yſtint.
They were ful glad to excuſen hem ful blive
Of thing, the which they never agilt hir live.
Of wenches wold I beren hem on hond,
Whan that for ſike unnethes might they ſtond,
Yet tikeled I his herte for that he
Wend that I had of him ſo gret chiertee:
I ſwore that all my walking out by night
Was for to eſpien wenches that he dight:
Under that colour had I many a mirth.
For all ſwiche wit is yeven us in our birth;
Deceite, weping, ſpinning, God hath yeven
To women kindly, while that they may liven.
And thus of o thing I may avaunten me,
At th'ende I had the beter in eche degree,
By ſleight or force, or by ſom maner thing,
As by continual murmur or grutching,
Namely a-bed, ther hadden they meſchance,
Ther wold I chide, and don hem no pleſance:
I wold no lenger in the bed abide,
If that I felt his arme over my ſide,

Til he had made his raunſon unto me,
Than wold I ſoffre him do his nicetee.
And therfore every man this tale I tell,
Winne who ſo may, for all is for to ſell:
With empty hond men may no haukes lure,
For winning wold I all his luſt endure,
And maken me a feined appetit,
And yet in bacon had I never delit:
That maked me that ever I wold hem chide.
For though the pope had ſitten hem beſide,
I wold not ſpare hem at hir owen bord,
For by my trouthe I quitte hem word for word.
As helpe me veray God omnipotent,
Tho I right now ſhuld make my teſtament,
I ne owe hem not a word, that it n'is quit,
I brought it ſo abouten by my wit,
That they muſt yeve it up, as for the beſt,
Or elles had we never ben in reſt.
For though he loked as a wood leon,
Yet ſhuld he faille of his concluſion.
Than wold I ſay, now, goode lefe, take kepe.
How mekely loketh Wilkin oure ſhepe!
Come ner my ſpouſe, and let me ba thy cheke.
Ye ſhulden be al patient and meke,
And han a ſwete ſpiced conſcience,
Sith ye ſo preche of Jobes patience.

Suffreth alway, ſin ye ſo wel can preche,
And but ye do, certain we ſhal you teche
That it is faire to han a wif in pees.
On of us two moſte bowen doutelees:
And, ſith a man is more reſonable
Than woman is, ye moſten ben ſuffrable.
What aileth you to grutchen thus and grone?
Is it for ye wold have my queint alone?
Why take it all: lo, have it every del.
Peter, I ſhrew you but ye love it wel.
For if I wolde ſell my *belle choſe*,
I coude walke as freſhe as is a roſe,
But I wol kepe it for your owen toth.
Ye be to blame, by God, I ſay you ſoth.
Swiche maner wordes hadden we on hond.
Now wol I ſpeken of my fourthe huſbond.
My fourthe huſbonde was a revellour,
This is to ſayn, he had a paramour,
And I was yonge and ful of ragerie,
Stibborne and ſtrong, and joly as a pie.
Tho coude I dancen to an harpe ſmale,
And ſing ywis as any nightingale,
Whan I had dronke a draught of ſwete wine.
Metellius, the foule cherle, the ſwine,
That with a ſtaf beraft his wif hire lif
For ſhe drank wine, though I had ben his wif,

Ne ſhuld he not have daunted me fro drinke:
And after wine of Venus moſt I thinke.
For al ſo ſiker as cold engendreth hayl,
A likerous mouth moſt han a likerous tayl.
In woman vinolent is no defence,
This knowen lechours by experience.

But, lord Criſt, whan that it remembreth me
Upon my youth, and on my jolitee,
It tikleth me about myn herte-rote.
Unto this day it doth myn herte bote,
That I have had my world as in my time.
But age, alas! that all wol envenime,
Hath me beraft my beautee and my pith:
Let go, farewel, the devil go therwith.
The flour is gon, ther n'is no more to tell,
The bren, as I beſt may, now moſte I ſell.
But yet to be right mery wol I fond.
Now forth to tellen of my fourthe huſbond.

I ſay, I had in herte gret deſpit,
That he of any other had delit;
But he was quit by God and by Seint Joce:
I made him of the ſame wood a croce,
Not of my body in no foule manere,
But certainly I made folk ſwiche chere,
That in his owen greſe I made him frie
For anger, and for veray jalouſie.

By God, in erth I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his ſoule be in glorie.
For, God it wote, he ſate ful oft and ſonge,
Whan that his ſho ful bitterly him wronge.
Ther was no wight, ſave God and he, that wiſte
In many a wiſe how ſore that I him twiſte.
He died whan I came fro Jeruſalem,
And lith ygrave under the rode-beem:
All is his tombe not ſo curious
As was the ſepulcre of him Darius,
Which that Appelles wrought ſo ſotelly.
It is but waſt to bury hem preciouſly.
Let him farewel, God give his ſoule reſt,
He is now in his grave and in his cheſt.

Now of my fifthe huſbonde wol I telle:
God let his ſoule never come in helle.
And yet was he to me the moſte ſhrew,
That fele I on my ribbes all by rew,
And ever ſhal, unto min ending day.
But in our bed he was ſo freſh and gay,
And therwithall he coude ſo wel me gloſe,
Whan that he wolde han my *belle choſe*,
That, though he had me bet on every bon,
He coude win agen my love anon.
I trow, I love him the bet, for he
Was of his love ſo dangerous to me.

We wimmen han, if that I ſhal not lie,
In this matere a queinte fantaſie.
Waite, what thing we may nat lightly have,
Therafter wol we cry all day and crave.
Forbede us thing, and that deſiren we;
Preſe on us faſt, and thanne wol we flee.
With danger uttren we all our chaffare;
Gret prees at market maketh dere ware,
And to gret chepe is holden at litel priſe;
This knoweth every woman that is wiſe.
My fifthe huſbonde, God his ſoule bleſſe,
Which that I toke for love and no richeſſe,
He ſomtime was a clerk of Oxenforde,
And had left ſcole, and went at home at borde
With my goſſib, dwelling in oure toun:
God have hire ſoule, hire name was Aliſoun.
She knew my herte and all my privetee,
Bet than our pariſh preeſt, ſo mote I the.
To hire bewried I my conſeil all;
For had my huſbond piſſed on a wall,
Or don a thing that ſhuld have coſt his lif,
To hire, and to another worthy wif,
And to my nece, which that I loved wel,
I wold have told his conſeil every del.
And ſo I did ful often, God it wote,
That made his face ful often red and hote

For veray ſhame, and blamed himſelf, for he
Had told to me ſo gret a privetee.
And ſo befell that ones in a Lent,
(So often times I to my goſſib went,
For ever yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke in March, April, and May
From hous to hous, to heren ſondry tales)
That Jankin clerk, and my goſſib dame Ales,
And I myſelf, into the feldes went.
Myn huſbond was at London all that Lent;
I had the better leiſer for to pleie,
And for to ſee, and eke for to be ſeie
Of luſty folk; what wiſt I wher my grace
Was ſhapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore made I my viſitations
To vigilies, and to proceſſions,
To prechings eke, and to thiſe pilgrimages,
To playes of miracles, and mariages,
And wered upon my gay ſkarlet gites.
Thiſe wormes, ne thiſe mothes, ne thiſe mites
Upon my paraille frett hem never a del,
And woſt thou why? for they were uſed wel.
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me:
I ſay, that in the feldes walked we,
Till trewely we had ſwiche daliance
This clerk and I, that of my purveance

I ſpake to him, and ſaid him how that he,
If I were widewe, ſhulde wedden me.
For certainly, I ſay for no bobance,
Yet was I never without purveance
Of mariage, ne of other thinges eke:
I hold a mouſes wit not worth a leke,
That hath but on hole for to ſterten to,
And if that faille, than is all ydo.

I bare him on hond he had enchanted me;
(My dame taughte me that ſubtiltee)
And eke I ſayd, I mette of him all night,
He wold han ſlain me, as I lay upright,
And all my bed was full of veray blood;
But yet I hope that ye ſhuln do me good:
For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught.
And al was falſe, I dremed of him right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames lore,
As wel of that as of other thinges more.

But now, ſire, let me ſee, what ſhall I ſain?
A ha, by God I have my tale again.
Whan that my fourthe huſbonde was on bere,
I wept algate and made a ſory chere,
As wives moten, for it is the uſage;
And with my coverchefe covered my viſage;
But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wept but ſmal, and that I undertake.

To chirche was myn huſbond born a-morwe
With neigheboures that for him maden ſorwe,
And Jankin oure clerk was on of tho:
As helpe me God, whan that I ſaw him go
After the bere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet, ſo clene and faire,
That all my herte I yave unto his hold.
He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was fourty, if I ſhal ſay ſoth,
But yet I had alway a coltes toth.
Gat-tothed I was, and that became me wele,
I had the print of Seinte Venus ſele.
As helpe me God, I was a luſty on,
And faire, and riche, and yonge, and wel begon:
And trewely, as min huſbondes tolden me,
I had the beſte queint that mighte be.
For certes I am all venerian
In feling, and my herte is marcian:
Venus me yave my luſt and likerouſneſſe,
And Mars yave me my ſturdy hardineſſe.
Min aſcendent was Taure, and Mars therinne:
Alas, alas, that ever love was ſinne!
I folwed ay min inclination
By vertue of my conſtellation:
That made me that I coude nat withdraw
My chambre of Venus from a good felaw.

Yet have I Martes merke upon my face,
And alſo in another privee place.
For God ſo wiſly be my ſalvation,
I loved never by no diſcretion,
But ever folwed min appetit,
All were he ſhorte, longe, blake, or white,
I toke no kepe, ſo that he liked me,
How poure he was, ne eke of what degree.
What ſhuld I ſaye? but at the monthes end
This joly clerk Jankin, that was ſo hende,
Hath wedded me with gret ſolempnitee,
And to him yave I all the lond and fee,
That ever was me yeven therbefore:
But afterward repented me ful ſore.
He n'olde ſuffre nothing of my liſt.
By God he ſmote me ones with his fiſt,
For that I rent out of his book a lefe,
That of the ſtroke myn ere wex al defe.
Stibborne I was, as is a leoneſſe,
And of my tonge a veray janglereſſe,
And walke I wold, as I had don beforn,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it ſworn:
For which he oftentimes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romaine geſtes teche.
How he Sulpitius Gallus left his wif,
And hire forſoke for terme of all his lif,

Not but for open-heded he hire ſay
Loking out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romaine told he me by name,
That, for his wif was at a ſommer game
Without his weting, he forſoke hire eke.
And than wold he upon his Bible ſeke
That ilke proverbe of Eccleſiaſte,
Wher he commandeth, and forbedeth faſte,
Man ſhal not ſuffer his wif go roule aboute.
Than wold he ſay right thus withouten doute:
Who ſo that bildeth his hous all of ſalwes,
And pricketh his blind hors over the falwes,
And ſuffereth his wif to go ſeken halwes,
Is worthy to be honged on the galwes.
But all for nought, I ſette not an hawe
Of his proverbes, ne of his olde ſawe;
Ne I wold not of him corrected be.
I hate hem that my vices tellen me,
And ſo do mo of us (God wote) than I.
This made him wood with me all utterly;
I n'olde not forbere him in no cas.
Now wol I ſay you ſoth by Seint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a lefe,
For which he ſmote me, ſo that I was defe.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his diſport he wolde it rede alway,

He cleped it Valerie, and Theophraſt,
And with that book he lough alway ful faſt.
And eke ther was a clerk ſomtime at Rome,
A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,
That made a book again Jovinian,
Which book was ther, and eke Tertullian,
Criſippus, Trotula, and Helowis,
That was abbeſſe not fer fro Paris;
And eke the paraboles of Salomon,
Ovides art, and bourdes many on;
And alle thiſe were bonden in o volume.
And every night and day was his cuſtume
(Whan he had leiſer and vacation
From other worldly occupation)
To reden in this book of wikked wives.
He knew of hem mo legendes and mo lives,
Than ben of goode wives in the Bible.
For truſteth wel, it is an impoſſible,
That any clerk wol ſpeken good of wives,
(But if it be of holy ſeintes lives)
Ne of non other woman never the mo.
Who peinted the leon, telleth me, who?
By God, if wimmen hadden written ſtories,
As clerkes han, within hir oratories,
They wold have writ of men more wikkedneſſe,
Than all the merke of Adam may redreſſe.

The children of Mercury and of Venus
Ben in hir werking ful contrarious.
Mercury loveth wiſdom and ſcience,
And Venus loveth riot and diſpence.
And for hir divers diſpoſition,
Eche falleth in others exaltation.
As thus, God wote, Mercury is deſolat
In Piſces, wher Venus is exaltat,
And Venus falleth wher Mercury is reiſed.
Therfore no woman of no clerk is preiſed.
The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkes not worth his old ſho,
Than ſiteth he doun, and writeth in his dotage,
That wimmen cannot kepe hir mariage.
But now to purpos, why I tolde thee,
That I was beten for a book parde.
Upon a night Jankin, that was our ſire,
Red on his book, as he ſate by the fire,
Of Eva firſt, that for hire wikkedneſſe
Was all mankinde brought to wretchedneſſe,
For which that Jeſu Criſt himſelf was ſlain,
That bought us with his herte-blood again.
Lo here expreſſe of wimmen may ye find,
That woman was the loſſe of all mankind.
Tho redde he me how Sampſon loſt his heres
Sleping, his lemman kitte hem with hire ſheres,

Thurgh whiche treſon loſt he both his eyen.
Tho redde he me, if that I ſhal not lien,
Of Hercules, and of his Deianire,
That cauſed him to ſet himſelf a-fire.
Nothing forgat he the care and the wo,
That Socrates had with his wives two;
How Xantippa caſt piſſe upon his hed.
This ſely man ſat ſtill, as he were ded,
He wiped his hed, no more dorſt he ſain,
But, er the thonder ſtint ther cometh rain.
Of Paſiphae, that was the quene of Crete,
For ſhrewedneſſe him thought the tale ſwete.
Fie, ſpeke no more (it is a griſely thing)
Of hire horrible luſt and hire liking.
Of Clitemneſtra for hire lecherie
That falſely made hire huſbond for to die,
He redde it with ful good devotion.
He told me eke, for what occaſion
Amphiorax at Thebes loſt his lif:
My huſbond had a legend of his wif
Eriphile, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told,
Wher that hire huſbond hidde him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes ſory grace.
Of Lima told he me, and of Lucie:
They bothe made hir huſbondes for to die,

That on for love, that other was for hate.
Lima hire huſbond on an even late
Enpoyſoned hath, for that ſhe was his ſo:
Lucia likerous loved hire huſbond ſo,
That for he ſhuld alway upon hire thinke,
She yave him ſwiche a maner love-drinke,
That he was ded er it were by the morwe:
And thus algates huſbondes hadden ſorwe.
Than told he me, how on Latumeus
Complained to his felaw Arius,
That in his gardin growed ſwiche a tree,
On which he ſaid how that his wives three
Honged hemſelf for hertes deſpitous.
O leve brother, quod this Arius,
Yeve me a plant of thilke bleſſed tree,
And in my gardin planted ſhal it be.
Of later date of wives hath he redde,
That ſom han ſlain hir huſbonds in hir bedde,
And let hir lechour dight hem all the night,
While that the corps lay in the flore upright:
And ſom han driven nailes in hir brain,
While that they ſlepe, and thus they han hem ſlain:
Som han hem yeven poyſon in hir drink:
He ſpake more harm than herte may bethinke.
And therwithall he knew of mo proverbes,
Than in this world their growen gras or herbes.

Bet is (quod he) thin habitation
Be with a leon, or a foule dragon,
Than with a woman uſing for to chide.
Bet is (quod he) high in the roof abide,
Than with an angry woman doun in the hous,
They ben ſo wikked and contrarious:
They haten, that hir huſbonds loven ay.
He ſayd, a woman caſt hire ſhame away,
Whan ſhe caſt of hire ſmock; and forthermo,
A faire woman, but ſhe be chaſt alſo,
Is like a gold ring in a ſowes noſe.
Who coude wene, or who coude ſuppoſe
The wo that in min herte was, and the pine?
And whan I ſaw he n'olde never fine
To reden on this curſed book all night,
Al ſodenly three leves have I plight
Out of his book, right as he redde, and eke
I with my fiſt ſo toke him on the cheke,
That in oure fire he fell bakward adoun.
And he up ſterte, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fiſt he ſmote me on the hed,
That in the flore I lay as I were ded.
And whan he ſaw how ſtille that I lay,
He was agaſt, and wold have fled away,
Til at the laſt out of my ſwough I brayde.
O, haſt thou ſlain me, falſe theef? I ſayde,

And for my lond thus haſt thou mordred me?
Er I be ded, yet wol I kiſſen thee.
And nere he came, and kneled faire adoun,
And ſayde; dere ſuſter Aliſoun,
As helpe me God I ſhal thee never ſmite:
That I have don it is thyſelf to wite,
Foryeve it me, and that I thee beſeke.
And yet eftſones I hitte him on the cheke,
And ſayde; theef, thus much am I awreke.
Now wol I die, I may no longer ſpeke.
But at the laſt, with mochel care and wo
We fell accorded by ourſelven two:
He yaf me all the bridel in min hond
To han the governance of hous and lond,
And of his tonge, and of his hond alſo,
And made him brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan that I had getten unto me
By maiſtrie all the ſoverainetee,
And that he ſayd, min owen trewe wif,
Do as thee liſt, the terme of all thy lif,
Kepe thin honour, and kepe eke min eſtat;
After that day we never had debat.
God helpe me ſo, I was to him as kinde,
As any wif fro Denmark unto Inde,
And al ſo trewe, and ſo was he to me:
I pray to God that ſit in majeſtee

So bliſſe his ſoule, for his mercy dere.
Now wol I ſay my tale if ye wol here.
The frere lough whan he had herd all this:
Now dame, quod he, ſo have I joye and blis,
This is a long preamble of a tale.
And whan the Sompnour herd the frere gale,
Lo (quod this Sompnour) Goddes armes two,
A frere wol entermete him evermo:
Lo, goode men, a flie and eke a frere
Wol fall in every diſh and eke matere.
What ſpekeſt thou of preambulatioun?
What? amble or trot; or pees, or go ſit doun:
Thou letteſt our diſport in this matere.
Ye, wolt thou ſo, Sire Sompnour? quod the frere;
Now by my faith I ſhal, er that I go,
Tell of a Sompnour ſwiche a tale or two,
That all the folk ſhal laughen in this place.
Now elles, frere, I wol beſhrewe thy face,
(Quod this Sompnour) and I beſhrewe me,
But if I telle tales two or three
Of freres, or I come to Sidenborne,
That I ſhal make thin herte for to morne:
For wel I wot thy patience is gon.
Our hoſte cried; pees, and that anon;
And ſayde; let the woman tell hire tale.
Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.

Do, dame, tell forth your tale, and that is beſt.
Al redy, ſire, quod ſhe, right as you leſt,
If I have licence of this worthy frere.
Yes, dame, quod he, tell forth, and I wol here.

THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

In olde dayes of the king Artour,
Of which that Bretons ſpeken gret honour,
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie;
The Elf-quene, with hire joly compagnie,
Danced ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old opinion as I rede;
I ſpeke of many hundred yeres ago;
But now can no man ſee non elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of limitoures and other holy freres,
That ſerchen every land and every ſtreme,
As thikke as motes in the ſonne-beme,
Bliſſing halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
Citees and burghes, caſtles highe and toures,
Thropes and bernes, ſhepenes and dairies,
This maketh that ther ben no faeries:
For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
Ther walketh now the limitour himſelf,

In undermeles and in morweninges,
And ſayth his Matines and his holy thinges,
As he goth in his limitatioun.
Women may now go ſafely up and doun,
In every buſh, and under every tree,
Ther is non other incubus but he,
And he ne will don hem no diſhonour.

And ſo befell it, that this king Artour
Had in his hous a luſty bacheler,
That on a day came riding fro river:
And happed, that, alone as ſhe was borne,
He ſaw a maiden walking him beforne,
Of which maid he anon, maugre hire hed,
By veray force beraft hire maidenhed:
For which oppreſſion was ſwiche clamour,
And ſwiche purſuite unto the king Artour,
That damned was this knight for to be ded
By cours of lawe, and ſhuld have loſt his hed,
(Paraventure ſwiche was the ſtatute tho,)
But that the quene and other ladies mo
So longe praieden the king of grace,
Til he his lif him granted in the place,
And yaf him to the quene, all at hire will
To cheſe whether ſhe wold him ſave or ſpill.

The quene thanketh the king with al hire might;
And after this thus ſpake ſhe to the knight,

Whan that ſhe ſaw hire time upon a day.
Thou ſtandeſt yet (quod ſhe) in ſwiche array,
That of thy lif yet haſt thou no ſeuretee;
I grant thee lif, if thou canſt tellen me,
What thing is it that women moſt deſiren:
Beware, and kepe thy nekke-bone from yren.
And if thou canſt not tell it me anon,
Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon
A twelvemonth and a day, to ſeke and lere
An anſwer ſuffiſant in this matere.
And ſeuretee wol I have, or that thou pace,
Thy body for to yelden in this place.
Wo was the knight, and ſorwefully he ſiketh;
But what? he may not don all as him liketh.
And at the laſt he cheſe him for to wende,
And come agen right at the yeres ende
With ſwiche anſwer, as God wold him purvay:
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his way.
He ſeketh every hous and every place,
Wher as he hopeth for to finden grace,
To lernen what thing women loven moſte:
But he ne coude ariven in no coſte,
Wher as he mighte find in this matere
Two creatures according in fere.
Som ſaiden, women loven beſt richeſſe,
Som ſaiden honour, ſom ſaiden jolineſſe,

Som riche array, ſom ſaiden luſt a-bedde,
And oft time to be widewe and to be wedde.
Some ſaiden, that we ben in herte moſt eſed
Whan that we ben yflatered and ypreiſed.
He goth ful nigh the ſothe, I wol not lie;
A man ſhal winne us beſt with flaterie;
And with attendance, and with beſineſſe
Ben we ylimed bothe more and leſſe.
And ſom men ſaiden, that we loven beſt
For to be free, and do right as us left,
And that no man repreve us of our vice,
But ſay that we ben wiſe, and nothing nice.
For trewely ther n'is non of us all,
If any wight wol claw us on the gall,
That we n'ill kike, for that he ſaith us ſoth:
Aſſay, and he ſhal find it, that ſo doth.
For be we never ſo vicious withinne,
We wol be holden wiſe and clene of ſinne.
And ſom ſaiden, that gret delit han we
For to be holden ſtable and eke ſecre,
And in o purpos ſtedfaſtly to dwell,
And not bewreyen thing that men us tell.
But that tale is not worth a rake-ſtele.
Parde we women connen nothing hele,
Witneſſe on Mida; wol ye here the tale?
Ovide, amonges other thinges ſmale,

Said, Mida had under his longe heres
Growing upon his hed two aſſes eres;
The whiche vice he hid, as he beſte might,
Ful ſubtilly from every mannes ſight,
That, ſave his wif, ther wiſt of it no mo;
He loved hire moſt, and truſted hire alſo;
He praied hire, that to no creature
She n'olde tellen of his disfigure.

She ſwore him, nay, for all the world to winne,
She n'olde do that vilanie, ne ſinne,
To make hire huſbond han ſo foule a name:
She n'olde not tell it for hire owen ſhame.
But natheles hire thoughte that ſhe dide,
That ſhe ſo longe ſhuld a conſeil hide;
Hire thought it ſwal ſo ſore aboute hire herte,
That nedely ſom word hire muſt aſterte;
And ſith ſhe dorſt nat telle it to no man,
Doun to a mareis faſte by ſhe ran,
Til ſhe came ther, hire herte was a-fire:
And as a bitore bumbleth in the mire,
She laid hire mouth unto the water doun.
Bewrey me not, thou water, with thy ſoun,
Quod ſhe, to thee I tell it, and no mo,
Min huſbond hath long aſſes eres two.
Now is min herte all hole, now is it out,
I might no lenger kepe it out of dout.

Here may ye ſee, though we a time abide,
Yet out it moſte, we can no conſeil hide.
The remenant of the tale, if ye wol here,
Redeth Ovide, and ther ye may it lere.
This knight, of which my tale is ſpecially,
Whan that he ſaw he might not come therby,
(This is to ſayn, what women loven moſt)
Within his breſt ful ſorweful was his goſt.
But home he goth, he mighte not ſojourne,
The day was come, that homward muſt he turne.
And in his way, it happed him to ride
In all his care, under a foreſt ſide,
Wheras he ſaw upon a dance go
Of ladies foure and twenty, and yet mo.
Toward this ilke dance he drow ful yerne,
In hope that he ſom wiſdom ſhulde lerne;
But certainly, er he came fully there,
Yvaniſhed was this dance, he n'iſte not wher;
No creature ſaw he that bare lif,
Save on the grene he ſaw ſitting a wif,
A fouler wight ther may no man deviſe.
Againe this knight this olde wif gan ariſe,
And ſaid; ſire knight, here forth ne lith no way.
Tell me what that ye ſeken by your fay.
Paraventure it may the better be:
Thiſe olde folk con mochel thing, quod ſhe.

My leve mother, quod this knight, certain,
I n'am but ded, but if that I can ſain,
What thing it is that women moſt deſire:
Coude ye me wiſſe, I wold quite wel your hire.
Plight me thy trouthe here in myn hond, quod ſhe,
The nexte thing that I requere of thee
Thou ſhalt it do, if it be in thy might,
And I wol tell it you or it be night.
Have here my trouthe, quod the knight, I graunte.
Thanne, quod ſhe, I dare me wel avaunte,
Thy lif is ſauf, for I wol ſtond therby,
Upon my lif the quene wol ſay as I:
Let ſee, which is the proudeſt of hem alle,
That wereth on a kerchef or a calle,
That dare ſayn nay of that I ſhal you teche.
Let us go forth withouten lenger ſpeche.
Tho rowned ſhe a piſtel in his ere,
And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
Whan they ben comen to the court, this knight
Said, he had hold his day, as he had hight,
And redy was his anſwere, as he ſaide.
Ful many a noble wif, and many a maide,
And many a widewe, for that they ben wiſe,
(The quene hireſelf ſitting as a juſtice)
Aſſembled ben, his anſwer for to here,
And afterward this knight was bode appere.

To every wight commanded was ſilence,
And that the knight ſhuld tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women loven beſt.
This knight ne ſtood not ſtill, as doth a beſt,
But to this queſtion anon anſwerd
With manly vois, that all the court it herd.

My liege lady, generally, quod he,
Women deſiren to han ſoverainetee,
As well over hir huſbond as hir love,
And for to ben in maiſtrie him above.
This is your moſt deſire, though ye me kille,
Doth as you liſt, I am here at your wille.

In all the court ne was ther wif ne maide,
Ne widewe, that contraried that he ſaide,
But ſaid, he was worthy to han his lif.

And with that word up ſtert this olde wif,
Which that the knight ſaw ſitting on the grene.
Mercy, quod ſhe, my ſoveraine lady quene,
Er that your court depart, as doth me right.
I taughte this anſwer unto this knight,
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firſte thing I wold of him requere,
He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court than pray I thee, ſire knight,
Quod ſhe, that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou woſt, that I have kept thy lif:

If I ſay falſe, ſay nay upon thy fay.
This knight anſwered, alas and wala wa!
I wot right wel that ſwiche was my beheſt.
For Goddes love as cheſe a new requeſt:
Take all my good, and let my body go.
Nay than, quod ſhe, I ſhrewe us bothe two.
For though that I be olde, foule, and pore,
I n'olde for all the metal ne the ore,
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But if thy wif I were and eke thy love.
My love? quod he, nay, my dampnation.
Alas! that any of my nation
Shuld ever ſo foule diſparaged be.
But all for nought; the end is this, that he
Conſtrained was, he nedes muſt hire wed,
And taketh this olde wif, and goth to bed.
Now wolden ſom men fayn paraventure,
That for my negligence I do no cure
To tellen you the joye and all the array,
That at the feſte was that ilke day.
To which thing ſhortly anſweren I ſhal:
I ſay ther was no joye ne feſte at al,
Ther n'as but hevineſſe and mochel forwe:
For prively he wedded hire on the morwe,
And all day after hid him as an oule,
So wo was him, his wif loked ſo foule.

Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wif a-bed ybrought,
He walweth, and he turneth to and fro.
This olde wif lay ſmiling evermo,
And ſaid: O dere huſbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knight thus with his wif as ye?
Is this the lawe of king Artoures hous?
Is every knight of his thus dangerous?
I am your owen love, and eke your wif,
I am ſhe, which that ſaved hath your lif,
And certes yet did I you never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firſte night?
Ye faren like a man had loſt his wit.
What is my gilt? for Goddes love tell it,
And it ſhal ben amended, if I may.
Amended? quod this knight, alas! nay, nay,
It wol not ben amended never mo;
Thou art ſo lothly, and ſo olde alſo,
And therto comen of ſo low a kind,
That litel wonder is though I walwe and wind;
So wolde God, min herte wolde breſt.
Is this, quod ſhe, the cauſe of your unreſt?
Ye certainly, quod he, no wonder is.
Now ſire, quod ſhe, I coude amend all this,
If that me liſt, er it were dayes three,
So wel ye mighten bere you unto me.

But for ye ſpeken of ſwiche gentilleſſe,
As is deſcended out of old richeſſe,
That therfore ſhullen ye be gentilmen;
Swiche arrogance n'is not worth an hen.
Loke who that is moſt vertuous alway,
Prive and apert, and moſt entendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And take him for the greteſt gentilman.
Crift wol we claime of him our gentilleſſe,
Not of our elders for hir old richeſſe.
For though they yeve us all hir heritage,
For which we claime to ben of high parage,
Yet may they not bequethen, for no thing,
To non of us, hir vertuous living,
That made hem gentilmen called to be,
And bade us folwen hem in ſwiche degree.
Wel can the wiſe poet of Florence,
That highte Dant, ſpeken of this ſentence:
Lo, in ſwiche maner rime is Dantes tale.
Ful ſelde up riſeth by his branches ſmale
Proweſſe of man, for God of his goodneſſe
Wol that we claime of him our gentilleſſe:
For of our elders may we nothing claime
But temporel thing, that man may hurt and maime.
Eke every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentilleſſe were planted naturelly

Unto a certain linage doun the line,
Prive and apert, than wold they never fine
To don of gentilleſſe the faire office,
They mighten do no vilanie or vice.

Take fire and bere it into the derkeſt hous
Betwix this and the mount of Caucaſus,
And let men ſhette the dores, and go thenne,
Yet wol the fire as faire lie and brenne
As twenty thouſand men might it behold;
His office naturel ay wol it hold,
Up peril of my lif, til that it die.

Here may ye ſee wel, how that genterie
Is not annexed to poſſeſſion,
Sith folk ne don hir operation
Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in his kind.
For God it wot, men moun ful often find
A lordes ſone do ſhame and vilanie.
And he that wol han pris of his genterie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his elders noble and vertuous,
And n'ill himſelven do no gentil dedes,
Ne folwe his gentil aunceſtrie, that ded is,
He n'is not gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vilains ſinful dedes make a cherl.
For gentilleſſe n'is but the renomee
Of thin aunceſtres, for hir high bountee,

Which is a ſtrange thing to thy perſone:
Thy gentilleſſe cometh fro God alone.
Than cometh our veray gentilleſſe of grace,
It was no thing bequethed us with our place.

Thinketh how noble, as ſaith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hoſtilius,
That out of poverte roſe to high nobleſſe.
Redeth Senek, and redeth eke Boece,
Ther ſhull ye ſeen expreſſe, that it no dred is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
And therfore, leve huſbond, I thus conclude,
Al be it that min aunceſtres weren rude,
Yet may the highe God, and ſo hope I,
Granten me grace to liven vertuouſly:
Than am I gentil, whan that I beginne
To liven vertuouſly, and weiven ſinne.

And ther as ye of poverte me repreve,
The highe God, on whom that we beleve,
In wilful poverte cheſe to lede his lif:
And certes, every man, maiden, or wif
May underſtond, that Jeſus heven king
Ne wold not cheſe a vicious living.

Glad poverte is an honeſt thing certain.
This wol Senek and other clerkes ſain.
Who ſo that halt him paid of his poverte,
I hold him rich, al had he not a ſherte.

He that coveiteth is a poure wight,
For he wold han that is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, ne coveiteth to have,
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave.
Veray poverte is ſinne proprely.
Juvenal ſaith of poverte merily:
The poure man whan he goth by the way,
Beforn the theves he may ſing and play.
Poverte is hateful good; and, as I geſſe,
A ful gret bringer out of beſineſſe;
A gret amender eke of ſapience
To him, that taketh it in patience.
Poverte is this, although it ſeme elenge,
Poſſeſſion that no wight wol challenge.
Poverte ful often, whan a man is low,
Maketh his God and eke himſelf to know:
Poverte a ſpectakel is, as thinketh me,
Thurgh which he may his veray frendes ſee.
And therfore, ſire, ſin that I you not greve,
Of my poverte no more me repreve.
Now, ſire, of elde, that ye repreven me:
And certes, ſire, though non auctoritee
Were in no book, ye gentiles of honour
Sain, that men ſhuld an olde wight honour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentilleſſe;
And auctours ſhal I finden, as I geſſe.

Now ther ye ſain that I am foule and old,
Than drede ye not to ben a cokewold.
For filthe, and elde alſo, ſo mote I the,
Ben grete wardeins upon chaſtitee.
But natheles, ſin I know your delit,
I ſhal fulfill your worldly appetit.
Cheſe now (quod ſhe) on of thiſe thinges twey,
To han me foule and old til that I dey,
And be to you a trewe humble wif,
And never you diſpleſe in all my lif:
Or elles wol ye han me yonge and faire,
And take your aventure of the repaire,
That ſhal be to your hous becauſe of me,
Or in ſom other place it may wel be?
Now cheſe yourſelven whether that you liketh.
This knight aviſeth him, and ſore ſiketh,
But at the laſt he ſaid in this manere;
My lady and my love, and wif ſo dere,
I put me in your wiſe governance,
Cheſeth yourſelf which may be moſt pleſance
And moſt honour to you and me alſo,
I do no force the whether of the two:
For as you liketh, it ſufficeth me.
Than have I got the maiſterie, quod ſhe,
Sin I may cheſe and governe as me leſt.
Ye certes, wif, quod he, I hold it beſt.

Kiſſe me, quod ſhe, we be no lenger wrothe,
For by my trouth I wol be to you bothe,
This is to ſayn, ye bothe faire and good.
I pray to God that I mote ſterven wood,
But I to you be al ſo good and trewe,
As ever was wif, ſin that the world was newe;
And but I be to-morwe as faire to ſeen,
As any lady, emperice, or quene,
That is betwix the Eſt and eke the Weſt,
Doth with my lif and deth right as you leſt.
Caſt up the curtein, loke how that it is.

And whan the knight ſaw veraily all this,
That ſhe ſo faire was, and ſo yonge therto,
For joye he hent hire in his armes two:
His herte bathed in a bath of bliſſe,
A thouſand time a-row he gan hire kiſſe:
And ſhe obeyed him in every thing,
That mighte don him pleſance or liking.
And thus they live unto hir lives ende
In parfit joye, and Jeſu Criſt us ſende
Huſbondes meke and yonge, and freſsh a-bed,
And grace to overlive hem that we wed.

And eke I pray Jeſus to ſhort hir lives,
That wol not be governed by hir wives.
And old and angry nigards of diſpence,
God ſend hem ſone a veray peſtilence.

THE FRERES PROLOGUE.

v. 6847—6867

THIS worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made alway a maner louring chere
Upon the Sompnour, but for honeſtee
No vilains word as yet to him ſpake he:
But at the laſt he ſaid unto the wif;
Dame, (quod he) God yeve you right good lif,
Ye have here touched, all ſo mote I the,
In ſcole matere a ful gret difficultee.
Ye han ſaid mochel thing right wel, I ſay:
But, dame, here as we riden by the way,
Us nedeth not to ſpeken but of game,
And let auctoritees in Goddes name
To preching, and to ſcole eke of clergie.
But if it like unto this compagnie,
I wol you of a Sompnour tell a game;
Parde ye may wel knowen by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be ſaid;
I pray that non of you be evil apaid;
A Sompnour is a renner up and doun
With mandements for fornicatioun,
And is ybete at every tounes ende.

Tho ſpake our hoſte; A, ſire, ye ſhuld ben hende
And curteis, as a man of your eſtat,
In compagnie we wiln have no debat:
Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.
Nay, quod the Sompnour, let him ſay by me
What ſo him liſt; whan it cometh to my lot,
By God I ſhal him quiten every grot.
I ſhal him tellen which a gret honour
It is to be a flatering limitour,
And eke of many another maner crime,
Which nedeth not reherſen at this time,
And his office I ſhal him tell ywis.
Our hoſte anſwered; pees, no more of this.
And afterward he ſaid unto the Frere,
Tell forth your tale, min owen maiſter dere.

THE FRERES TALE.

Whilom ther was dwelling in my contree
An archedeken, a man of high degree,
That boldely did execution
In puniſhing of fornication,
Of witchecraft, and eke of bauderie,
Of defamation, and avouterie,

Of chirche-reves, and of teſtaments,
Of contracts, and of lack of ſacraments,
Of uſure, and of ſimonie alſo;
But certes lechours did he greteſt wo;
They ſhulden ſingen, if that they were hent;
And ſmale titheres weren foule yſhent,
If any perſone wold upon hem plaine,
Ther might aſtert hem no pecunial peine.
For ſmale tithes, and ſmale offering,
He made the peple pitouſly to ſing;
For er the biſhop hent hem with his crook
They weren in the archedekens book;
Than had he thurgh his juriſdiction
Power to don on hem correction.
He had a Sompnour redy to his hond,
A ſlier boy was non in Englelond;
For ſubtilly he had his eſpiaille,
That taught him wel wher it might ought availle.
He coude ſpare of lechours on or two,
To techen him to foure and twenty mo.
For though this Sompnour wood be as an hare,
To tell his harlotrie I wol not ſpare,
For we ben out of hir correction,
They han of us no juriſdiction,
Ne never ſhul have, terme of all hir lives.
Peter, ſo ben the women of the ſtives,

Quod this Sompnour, yput out of our cure.
Pees, with miſchance and with miſaventure,
Our hoſte ſaid, and let him tell his tale.
Now telleth forth, and let the Sompnour gale,
Ne ſpareth not, min owen maiſter dere.
This falſe theef, this Sompnour, quod the frere,
Had alway baudes redy to his hond,
As any hauke to lure in Englelond,
That told him all the ſecree that they knewe,
For hir acquaintance was not come of newe;
They weren his approvers prively.
He tooke himſelf a gret profit therby:
His maiſter knew not alway what he wan.
Withouten mandement, a lewed man
He coude ſompne, up peine of Criſtes curſe,
And they were inly glad to fille his purſe,
And maken him gret feſtes at the nale.
And right as Judas hadde purſes ſmale
And was a theef, right ſwiche a theef was he,
His maſter hadde but half his duetee.
He was (if I ſhal yeven him his laud)
A theef, and eke a Sompnour, and a baud.
He had eke wenches at his retenue,
That whether that ſire Robert or ſire Hue,
Or Jakke, or Rauf, or who ſo that it were
That lay by hem, they told it in his ere.

Thus was the wenche and he of on aſſent.
And he wold fecche a feined mandement,
And ſompne hem to the chapitre bothe two,
And pill the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he ſay; frend, I ſhal for thy ſake
Do ſtrike thee out of oure lettres blake;
Thee thar no more as in this cas travaille;
I am thy frend ther I may thee availle.
Certain he knew of briboures many mo,
Than poſſible is to tell in yeres two:
For in this world n'is dogge for the bowe,
That can an hurt dere from an hole yknowe,
Bet than this Sompnour knew a ſlie lechour,
Or an avoutrer, or a paramour:
And for that was the fruit of all his rent,
Therfore on it he ſet all his entent.
And ſo befell, that ones on a day
This Sompnour, waiting ever on his pray,
Rode forth to ſompne a widewe, an olde ribibe,
Feining a cauſe, for he wold han a bribe.
And happed that he ſaw beforn him ride
A gay yeman under a foreſt ſide:
A bow he bare, and arwes bright and kene,
He had upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his hed with frenges blake.
Sire, quod this Sompnour, haile and wel atake.

Welcome, quod he, and every good felaw;
Whider rideſt thou under this grene ſhaw?
(Saide this yeman) wolt thou fer to-day?
This Sompnour him anſwerd, and ſaide, nay.
Here faſte by (quod he) is min entent
To riden, for to reiſen up a rent,
That longeth to my lordes duetee.
A, art thou than a baillif? Ye, quod he.
(He dorſte not for veray filth and ſhame
Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.)
De par dieux, quod this yeman, leve brother,
Thou art a baillif, and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this contree.
Of thin acquaintance I wol prayen thee,
And eke of brotherhed, if that thee liſt.
I have gold and ſilver lying in my chiſt;
If that thee hap to come in to our ſhire,
Al ſhal be thin, right as thou wolt deſire.
Grand mercy, quod this Sompnour, by my faith.
Everich in others hond his trouthe laith,
For to be ſworne brethren til they dey.
In daliaunce they riden forth and pley.
This Sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,
As ful of venime ben thiſe wariangles,
And ever enquering upon every thing,
Brother, quod he, wher is now your dwelling,

Another day if that I ſhuld you ſeche?
This yeman him anſwerd in ſofte ſpeche;
Brother, quod he, fer in the North contree,
Wheras I hope ſomtime I ſhal thee ſee.
Or we depart I ſhal thee ſo wel wiſſe,
That of min hous ne ſhalt thou never miſſe.
Now brother, quod this Sompnour, I you pray,
Teche me, while that we riden by the way,
(Sith that ye ben a baillif as am I)
Som ſubtiltee, and tell me faithfully
In min office how I may moſte winne.
And ſpareth not for conſcience or for ſinne,
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.
Now by my trouthe, brother min, ſaid he,
As I ſhal tellen thee a faithful tale.
My wages ben ful ſtreit and eke ful ſmale;
My lord is hard to me and dangerous,
And min office is ful laborious;
And therfore by extortion I leve,
Forſoth I take all that men wol me yeve.
Algates by ſleighte or by violence
Fro yere to yere I win all my diſpence;
I can no better tellen faithfully.
Now certes, (quod this Sompnour) ſo fare I;
I ſpare not to taken, God it wote,
But if it be to hevy or to hote.

What I may gete in conſeil prively,
No maner conſcience of that have I.
N'ere min extortion, I might not liven,
Ne of ſwiche japes wol I not be ſhriven.
Stomak ne conſcience know I non;
I ſhrew thiſe ſhrifte-faders everich on.
Wel be we met by God and by Seint Jame.
But leve brother, tell me than thy name,
Quod this Sompnour. Right in this mene while
This yeman gan a litel for to ſmile.

Brother, quod he, wolt thou that I thee telle?
I am a fend, my dwelling is in helle,
And here I ride about my pourchaſing,
To wote wher men wol give me any thing.
My pourchas is th'effect of all my rente.
Loke how thou rideſt for the ſame entente
To winnen good, thou rekkeſt never how,
Right ſo fare I, for riden wol I now
Unto the worldes ende for a praye.

A, quod this Sompnour, *benedicite*, what ſay ye?
I wend ye were a yeman trewely.
Ye have a mannes ſhape as wel as I.
Have ye than a figure determinat
In helle, ther ye ben in your eſtat?

Nay certainly, quod he, ther have we non,
But whan us liketh we can take us on,

Or elles make you wene that we ben ſhape
Somtime like a man, or like an ape;
Or like an angel can I ride or go;
It is no wonder thing though it be ſo,
A louſy jogelour can deceiven thee,
And parde yet can I more craft than he.

Why, quod the Sompnour, ride ye than or gon
In ſondry ſhape, and not alway in on?

For we, quod he, wol us ſwiche forme make,
As moſt is able our preye for to take.

What maketh you to han al this labour?

Ful many a cauſe, leve ſire Sompnour,
Saide this fend. But alle thing hath time;
The day is ſhort, and it is paſſed prime,
And yet ne wan I nothing in this day;
I wol entend to winning, if I may,
And not entend our thinges to declare:
For, brother min, thy wit is al to bare
To underſtand, although I told hem thee.
But for thou axeſt, why labouren we:
For ſomtime we be Goddes inſtruments,
And menes to don his commandements,
Whan that him liſt, upon his creatures,
In divers actes and in divers figures:
Withouten him we have no might certain,
If that him liſt to ſtonden theragain.

And ſomtime at our praiere han we leve,
Only the body, and not the ſoule to greve:
Witneſſe on Job, whom that we diden wo.
And ſomtime han we might on bothe two,
This is to ſain, on ſoule and body eke.
And ſomtime be we ſuffered for to ſeke
Upon a man, and don his ſoule unreſte
And not his body, and all is for the beſte.
Whan he withſtandeth our temptation,
It is a cauſe of his ſalvation,
Al be it that it was not our entente
He ſhuld be ſauf, but that we wold him hente.
And ſomtime be we ſervants unto man,
As to the archebiſhop Seint Dunſtan,
And to the apoſtle ſervant eke was I.

Yet tell me, quod this Sompnour, faithfully,
Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
Of elements? The fend anſwered, nay:
Somtime we feine, and ſomtime we ariſe
With dede bodies, in ful ſondry wiſe,
And ſpeke as renably, and faire, and wel,
As to the Phitoneſſe did Samuel:
And yet wol ſom men ſay it was not he.
I do no force of your divinitee.
But o thing warne I thee, I wol not jape,
Thou wolt algates wete how we be ſhape:

Thou ſhalt hereafterward, my brother dere,
Come, wher thee nedeth not of me to lere,
For thou ſhalt by thin owen experience
Conne in a chaiere rede of this ſentence,
Bet than Virgile, while he was on live,
Or Dant alſo. Now let us riden blive,
Fer I wol holden compagnie with thee,
Til it be ſo that thou forſake me.

Nay, quod this Sompnour, that ſhal never betide.
I am a yeman knowen is ful wide;
My trouthe wol I hold, as in this cas.
For though thou were the devil Sathanas,
My trouthe wol I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have ſworne, and eche of us to other,
For to be trewe brethren in this cas,
And bothe we gon abouten our pourchas.
Take thou thy part, what that men wol thee yeve,
And I ſhal min, thus may we bothe leve.
And if that any of us have more than other,
Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.

I graunte, quod the devil, by my fay.
And with that word they riden forth hir way,
And right at entring of the tounes ende,
To which this Sompnour ſhope him for to wende,
They ſaw a cart, that charged was with hay,
Which that a carter drove forth on his way.

Depe was the way, for which the carte ſtood:
The carter ſmote, and cried as he were wood,
Heit ſcot, heit brok, what ſpare ye for the ſtones?
The fend (quod he) you fecche body and bones,
As ferforthly as ever ye were foled,
So mochel wo as I have with you tholed.
The devil have al, bothe hors, and cart, and hay.

The Sompnour ſayde, here ſhal we have a pray;
And nere the fend he drow, as nought ne were,
Ful prively, and rouned in his ere:
Herken my brother, herken, by thy faith,
Hereſt thou not, how that the carter ſaith?
Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,
Both hay and cart, and eke his caples three.

Nay, quod the devil, God wot, never a del,
It is not his entente, truſt thou me wel,
Axe him thyſelf, if thou not troweſt me,
Or elles ſtint a while and thou ſhalt ſee.

This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
And they begonne to drawen and to ſtoupe.
Heit now, quod he, ther Jeſu Criſt you bleſſe,
And all his hondes werk, both more and leſſe:
That was wel twight, min owen liard boy,
I pray God ſave thy body and Seint Eloy.
Now is my cart out of the ſlough parde.

Lo, brother, quod the fend, what told I thee?

Here may ye ſeen, min owen dere brother,
The cherl ſpake o thing, but he thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our viage;
Here win I nothing upon this cariage.

Whan that they comen ſomwhat out of toun,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to roune;
Brother, quod he, here woneth an old rebekke,
That had almoſt as lefe to leſe hire nekke,
As for to yeve a peny of hire good.
I wol have twelf pens though that ſhe be wood,
Or I wol ſomone hire to our office;
And yet, God wot, of hire know I no vice.
But for thou canſt not, as in this contree,
Winnen thy coſt, take here enſample of me.

This Sompnour clappeth at the widewes gate;
Come out, he ſayd, thou olde very trate;
I trow thou haſt ſom frere or preeſt with thee.

Who clappeth? ſaid this wif, *benedicite*,
God ſave you, ſire, what is your ſwete will?

I have, quod he, of ſomons here a bill.
Up peine of curſing, loke that thou be
To-morwe before the archedekenes knee,
To anſwere to the court, of certain thinges.

Now lord, quod ſhe, Criſt Jeſu, king of kinges,
So wiſly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have ben ſike, and that ful many a day.

I may not go ſo fer (quod ſhe) ne ride,
But I be ded, ſo priketh it in my ſide.
May I not axe a libel, ſire Sompnour,
And anſwere ther by my procuratour
To ſwiche thing as men wold appoſen me?
Yes, quod this Sompnour, pay anon, let ſee,
Twelf pens to me, and I wol thee acquite.
I ſhal no profit han therby but lite:
My maiſter hath the profit and not I.
Come of, and let me riden haſtily;
Yeve me twelf pens, I may no lenger tarie.
Twelf pens, quod ſhe, now lady Seinte Marie
So wiſly helpe me out of care and ſinne,
This wide world though that I ſhuld it winne,
Ne have I not twelf pens within my hold.
Ye knowen wel that I am poure and old;
Kithe your almeſſe upon me poure wretche.
Nay than, quod he, the foule fend me fetche,
If I thee excuſe, though thou ſhuldeſt be ſpilt.
Alas! quod ſhe, God wot, I have no gilt.
Pay me, quod he, or by the ſwete Seinte Anne
As I wol bere away thy newe panne
For dette, which thou oweſt me of old,
Whan that thou madeſt thyn huſbond cokewold,
I paied at home for thy correction.
Thou lieſt, quod ſhe, by my ſalvation,

Ne was I never or now, widew ne wif,
Sompned unto your court in all my lif;
Ne never I n'as but of my body trewe.
Unto the devil rough and blake of hewe
Yeve I thy body and my panne alſo.

And whan the devil herd hire curſen ſo
Upon hire knees, he ſayd in this manere;

Now, Mabily, min owen moder dere,
Is this your will in erneſt that ye ſey?

The devil, quod ſhe, ſo fetche him or he dey,
And panne and all, but he wol him repent.

Nay, olde ſtot, that is not min entent,
Quod this Sompnour, for to repenten me
For any thing that I have had of thee;
I wold I had thy ſmok and every cloth.

Now brother, quod the devil, be not wroth;
Thy body and this panne ben min by right.
Thou ſhalt with me to helle yet to-night,
Wher thou ſhalt knowen of our privetee
More than a maiſter of divinitee.

And with that word the foule fend him hent.
Body and ſoule, he with the devil went,
Wher as thiſe Sompnours han hir heritage;
And God that maked after his image
Mankinde, ſave and gide us all and ſome,
And lene this Sompnour good man to become.

Lordings, I coude have told you, (quod this frere)
Had I had leiſer for this Sompnour here,
After the text of Criſt, and Poule, and John,
And of oure other doctours many on,
Swiche peines, that your hertes might agriſe,
Al be it ſo, that no tonge may deviſe,
Though that I might a thouſand winter telle,
The peines of thilke curſed hous of helle.
But for to kepe us fro that curſed place,
Waketh, and prayeth Jeſu of his grace,
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
Herkneth this word, beware as in this cas.
The leon ſit in his awaite alway
To ſle the innocent, if that he may.
Diſpoſeth ay your hertes to withſtond
The fend, that you wold maken thral and bond;
He may not tempten you over your might,
For Criſt wol be your champion and your knight;
And prayeth, that this Sompnour him repent
Of his miſdedes, or that the fend him hent.

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGUE.

v. 7247—7266

THIS Sompnour in his ſtirops high he ſtood,
Upon this Frere his herte was ſo wood,
That like an aſpen leef he quoke for ire:
Lordings, quod he, but o thing I deſire,
I you beſeche, that of your curteſie,
Sin ye han herd this falſe Frere lie,
As ſuffereth me I may my tale telle.
This Frere boſteth that he knoweth helle,
And, God it wot, that is but litel wonder,
Freres and fendes ben but litel aſonder.
For parde, ye han often time herd telle,
How that a Frere raviſhed was to helle
In ſpirit ones by a viſioun,
And as an angel lad him up and doun,
To ſhewen him the peines that ther were,
In all the place ſaw he not a Frere,
Of other folk he ſaw ynow in wo.
Unto this angel ſpake the Frere tho;
Now, ſire, quod he, han Freres ſwiche a grace,
That non of hem ſhal comen in this place?

Yes, quod this angel, many a millioun:
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
(And now hath Sathanas, ſaith he, a tayl
Broder than of a carrike is the ſayl)
Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas, quod he,
Shew forth thin ers, and let the Frere ſee
Wher is the neſt of Freres in this place.
And er than half a furlong way of ſpace,
Right ſo as bees out ſwarmen of an hive,
Out of the devils ers ther gonnen drive
A twenty thouſand Freres on a route.
And thurghout hell they ſwarmed al aboute,
And com agen, as faſt as they may gon,
And in his ers they crepen everich on:
He clapt his tayl agen, and lay ful ſtill.

This Frere, whan he loked had his fill
Upon the turments of this ſory place,
His ſpirit God reſtored of his grace
Into his body agen, and he awoke;
But natheles for fere yet he quoke,
So was the devils ers ay in his mind,
That is his heritage of veray kind.

God ſave you alle, ſave this curſed frere;
My prologue wol I end in this manere.

THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

v. 7291—7310

Lordings, ther is in Yorkſhire, as I geſſe,
A merſh contree ycalled Holderneſſe,
In which ther went a limitour aboute
To preche, and eke to beg, it is no doute.
And ſo befell that on a day this frere
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,
And ſpecially aboven every thing
Excited he the peple in his preching
To trentals, and to yeve for Goddes ſake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houſes make,
Ther as divine ſervice is honoured,
Not ther as it is waſted and devoured,
Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven,
As to poſſeſſioners, that mowen leven
(Thanked be God) in wele and abundance.
Trentals, ſayd he, deliveren fro penance
Hir frendes ſoules, as wel olde as yonge,
Ye, whan that they ben haſtily yſonge,
Not for to hold a preeſt jolif and gay,
He ſingeth not but o maſſe on a day.

Delivereth out (quod he) anon the foules.
Ful hard it is, with fleſhhook or with oules
To ben yclawed, or to bren or bake:
Now ſpede you haſtily for Criſtes ſake.
And whan this frere had ſaid all his entent,
With *qui cum patre* forth his way he went.
Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem leſt,
He went his way, no lenger wold he reſt,
With ſcrippe and tipped ſtaf, ytucked hie:
In every hous he gan to pore and prie,
And begged mele and cheſe, or elles corn.
His felaw had a ſtaf tipped with horn,
A pair of tables all of ivory,
And a pointel ypoliſhed fetifly,
And wrote alway the names, as he ſtood,
Of alle folk that yave hem any good,
Aſkaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
Yeve us a buſhel whete, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of cheſe,
Or elles what you liſt, we may not cheſe;
A Goddes halfpeny, or a maſſe peny;
Or yeve us of your braun, if ye have any,
A dagon of your blanket, leve dame,
Our ſuſter dere, (lo here I write your name)
Bacon or beef, or ſwiche thing as ye find.
A ſturdy harlot went hem ay behind,

That was hir hoſtes man, and bare a ſakke,
And what men yave hem, laid it on his bakke.
And whan that he was out at dore, anon
He planed away the names everich on,
That he before had written in his tables:
He ſerved hem with nifles and with fables.

Nay, ther thou lieſt, thou Sompnour, quod the frere.
Pees, quod our hoſte, for Criſtes moder dere,
Tell forth thy tale, and ſpare it not at all.

So thrive I, quod this Sompnour, ſo I ſhall.

So long he went fro hous to hous, til he
Came to an hous, ther he was wont to be
Refreſhed more than in a hundred places.
Sike lay the huſbond man, whos that the place is,
Bedred upon a couche low he lay:
Deus hic, quod he, O Thomas frend, good day,
Sayde this frere all curtiſly and ſoft.
Thomas, quod he, God yelde it you, ful oft
Have I upon this benche faren ful wele,
Here have I eten many a mery mele.
And fro the benche he drove away the cat,
And laied adoun his potent and his hat,
And eke his ſcrip, and ſet himſelf adoun:
His felaw was ywalked into toun
Forth with his knave, into that hoſtelrie,
Wher as he ſhope him thilke night to lie.

O dere maiſter, quod this ſike man,
How have ye faren ſin that March began?
I ſaw you not this fourtene night and more.
God wot, quod he, laboured have I ful ſore,
And ſpecially for thy ſalvation
Have I ſayd many a precious oriſon,
And for our other frendes, God hem bleſſe.
I have this day ben at your chirche at meſſe,
And ſaid a ſermon to my ſimple wit,
Not all after the text of holy writ,
For it is hard to you, as I ſuppoſe,
And therefore wol I teche you ay the gloſe.
Gloſing is a ful glorious thiing certain,
For letter ſleth, ſo as we clerkes ſain.
Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,
And ſpend hir good ther it is reſonable.
And ther I ſaw our dame, a, wher is ſhe?
Yonder I trow that in the yard ſhe be,
Sayde this man, and ſhe wol come anon.
Ey maiſter, welcome be ye by Seint John,
Sayde this wif, how fare ye hertily?
This frere ariſeth up ful curtiſly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kiſſeth hire ſwete, and chirketh as a ſparwe
With his lippes: dame, quod he, right wel,
As he that is your ſervant every del.

Thanked be God, that you yaf ſoule and lif,
Yet ſaw I not this day ſo faire a wif
In all the chirche, God ſo ſave me.
Ye, God amende defautes, ſire, quod ſhe,
Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.
Grand mercy, dame, that have I found alway.
But of your grete goodneſſe, by your leve,
I wolde pray you that ye not you greve,
I wol with Thomas ſpeke a litel throw:
Thiſe curates ben ſo negligent and ſlow
To gropen tendrely a conſcience.
In ſhrift, in preching is my diligence
And ſtudy, in Peters wordes and in Poules,
I walke and fisſhe Criſten mennes ſoules,
To yeld our Lord Jeſu his propre rent;
To ſprede his word is ſette all min entent.
Now by your faith, o dere ſire, quod ſhe,
Chideth him wel for Seinte Charitee.
He is ay angry as is a piſſemire,
Though that he have all that he can deſire,
Though I him wrie a-night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg and eke min arm,
He groneth as our bore, lith in our ſtie:
Other diſport of him right non have I,
I may not pleſe him in no maner cas.
O Thomas, *jeo vous die*, Thomas, Thomas,

This maketh the fend, this muſte ben amended.
Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,
And therof wol I ſpeke a word or two.
Now, maiſter, quod the wif, er that I go,
What wol ye dine? I wol go theraboute.
Now, dame, quod he, *jeo vous die ſanz doute*,
Have I nat of a capon but the liver,
And of your white bred nat but a ſhiver,
And after that a roſted pigges hed,
(But I ne wolde for me no beeſt were ded)
Than had I with you homly ſuffiſance.
I am a man of litel ſuſtenance.
My ſpirit hath his foſtring in the Bible.
My body is ay ſo redy and ſo penible
To waken, that my ſtomak is deſtroied.
I pray you, dame, that ye be nought annoied,
Though I ſo frendly you my conſeil ſhewe;
By God I n'old have told it but a fewe.
Now, ſire, quod ſhe, but o word er I go.
My child is ded within thiſe wekes two,
Sone after that ye went out of this toun.
His deth ſaw I by revelatioun,
Sayde this frere, at home in our dortour.
I dare wel ſain, that er than half an hour
After his deth, I ſaw him borne to bliſſe
In min aviſion, ſo God me wiſſe.

So did our ſextein, and our fermerere,
That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;
They may now, God be thanked of his lóne,
Maken hir jubilee, and walke alone.
And up I aroſe, and all our covent eke,
With many a tere trilling on our cheke,
Withouten noiſe or clatering of belles,
Te deum was our ſong, and nothing elles,
Save that to Criſt I bade an oriſon,
Thanking him of my revelation.
For, ſire and dame, truſteth me right wel,
Our oriſons ben more effectuel,
And more we ſeen of Criſtes ſecree thinges,
Than borel folk, although that they be kinges.
We live in poverte, and in abſtinence,
And borel folk in richeſſe and diſpence
Of mete and drinke, and in hir foule delit.
We han this worldes luſt all in deſpit.
Lazar and Dives liveden diverſely,
And divers guerdon hadden they therby.
Who ſo wol pray, he muſt faſt and be clene,
And fat his ſoule, and make his body lene.
We fare, as ſayth the apoſtle; cloth and food
Sufficeth us, though they be not ful good.
The cleneneſſe and the faſting of us freres,
Maketh that Criſt accepteth our praieres.

Lo, Moiſes forty daies and forty night
Faſted, er that the high God ful of might
Spake with him in the mountagne of Sinay:
With empty wombe of faſting many a day,
Received he the lawe, that was writen
With Goddes finger; and Eli, wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, er he had any ſpeche
With highe God, that is our lives leche,
He faſted long, and was in contemplance.

Aaron, that had the temple in governance,
And eke the other preeſtes everich on,
Into the temple whan they ſhulden gon
To praien for the peple, and do ſerviſe,
They n'olden drinken in no maner wiſe
No drinke, which that might hem dronken make,
But ther in abſtinence pray and wake,
Leſt that they deiden: take heed what I ſay—
But they be ſobre that for the peple pray—
Ware that I ſay—no more: for it ſufficeth.
Our Lord Jeſu, as holy writ deviſeth,
Yave us enſample of faſting and praieres:
Therfore we mendiants, we ſely freres,
Ben wedded to poverte and continence,
To charitee, humbleſſe, and abſtinence,
To perſecution for rightwiſneſſe,
To weping, miſericorde, and to cleneneſſe.

And therfore may ye ſee that our praieres
(I ſpeke of us, we mendiants, we freres)
Ben to the highe God more acceptable
Than youres, with your feſtes at your table.
Fro Paradis firſt, if I ſhal not lie,
Was man out chaſed for his glotonie,
And chaſt was man in Paradis certain.
But herken now, Thomas, what I ſhal ſain,
I have no text of it, as I ſuppoſe,
But I ſhal find it in a maner gloſe;
That ſpecially our ſwete Lord Jeſus
Spake this by freres, whan he ſayde thus,
Bleſſed be they that poure in ſpirit ben.
And ſo forth all the goſpel may ye ſen,
Whether it be liker our profeſſion,
Or hirs that ſwimmen in poſſeſſion,
Fie on hir pompe, and on hir glotonie,
And on hir lewedneſſe: I hem defie.
Me thinketh they ben like Jovinian,
Fat as a whale, and walken as a ſwan;
Al vinolent as botel in the ſpence;
Hir praier is of ful gret reverence;
Whan they for ſoules ſay the Pſalm of Davit,
Lo, buf they ſay, *Cor meum eructavit.*
Who foloweth Criſtes goſpel and his lore
But we, that humble ben, and chaſt, and pore,

Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
Therfore right as an hauke upon a ſours
Up ſpringeth into the aire, right ſo praieres
Of charitable and chaſt beſy freres,
Maken hir ſours to Goddes eres two.
Thomas, Thomas, ſo mote I ride or go,
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
N'ere thou our broder, ſhuldeſt thou not thrive.
In our chapitre pray we day and night
To Criſt, that he thee ſende hele and might
Thy body for to welden haſtily.
God wot, quod he, nothing therof fele I,
As help me Criſt, as I in fewe yeres
Have ſpended upon divers maner freres
Ful many a pound, yet fare I never the bet;
Certain my good have I almoſt beſet:
Farewel my good, for it is al ago.
The frere anſwered, O Thomas, doſt thou ſo?
What nedeth you diverſe freres to ſeche?
What nedeth him that hath a parfit leche,
To ſechen other leches in the toun?
Your inconſtance is your confuſion.
Hold ye than me, or elles our covent,
To pray for you ben inſufficient?
Thomas, that jape n'is not worth a mite;
Your maladie is for we han to lite.

A, yeve that covent half a quarter otes;
And yeve that covent four and twenty grotes;
And yeve that frere a peny, and let him go:
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be ſo.
What is a ferthing worth parted on twelve?
Lo, eche thing that is oned in himſelve
Is more ſtrong than whan it is yſcatered.
Thomas, of me thou ſhalt not ben yflatered,
Thou woldeſt han our labour al for nought.
The highe God, that all this world hath wrought,
Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire.
Thomas, nought of your treſor I deſire
As for myſelf, but that all our covent
To pray for you is ay ſo diligent:
And for to bilden Criſtes owen chirche.
Thomas, if ye wol lernen for to wirche,
Of bilding up of chirches may ye finde
If it be good, in Thomas lif of Inde.
Ye liggen here ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devil ſet your herte on fire,
And chiden here this holy innocent
Your wif, that is ſo good and patient.
And therfore trow me, Thomas, if thee leſt,
Ne ſtrive not with thy wif, as for the beſt.
And bere this word away now by thy faith,
Touching ſwiche thing, lo, what the wiſe ſaith:

Within thy hous ne be thou no leon;
To thy ſuggets do non oppreſſion;
Ne make thou not thin acquaintance to flee.
And yet, Thomas, eftſones charge I thee,
Beware from ire that in thy boſom ſlepeth,
Ware fro the ſerpent, that ſo ſlily crepeth
Under the gras, and ſtingeth ſubtilly.
Beware, my ſone, and herken patiently,
That twenty thouſand men han loſt hir lives
For ſtriving with hir lemmans and hir wives.
Now ſith ye han ſo holy and meek a wif,
What nedeth you, Thomas, to maken ſtrif?
Ther n'is ywis no ſerpent ſo cruel,
Whan man tredeth on his tail, ne half ſo fel,
As woman is, whan ſhe hath caught an ire;
Veray vengeance is than all hire deſire.
Ire is a ſinne, on of the grete ſeven,
Abhominable unto the God of heven,
And to himſelf it is deſtruction.
This every lewed vicar and parſon
Can ſay, how ire engendreth homicide;
Ire is in ſoth executour of pride.
I coud of ire ſay ſo mochel ſorwe,
My tale ſhulde laſten til to-morwe.
And therfore pray I God both day and night,
An irous man God ſend him litel might.

It is gret harm, and certes gret pitee
To ſette an irous man in high degree.
Whilom ther was an irous poteſtat,
As ſaith Senek, that during his eſtat
Upon a day out riden knightes two.
And, as fortune wold that it were ſo,
That on of hem came home, that other nought.
Anon the knight before the juge is brought,
That ſaide thus; thou haſt thy felaw ſlain,
For which I deme thee to the deth certain.
And to another knight commanded he;
Go, lede him to the deth, I charge thee.
And happed, as they wenten by the wey
Toward the place ther as he ſhulde dey,
The knight came, which men wenden had be dede.
Than thoughten they it was the beſte rede
To lede hem bothe to the juge again.
They ſaiden, lord, the knight ne hath not ſlain
His felaw, here he ſtondeth hol alive.
Ye ſhull be ded, quod he, ſo mot I thrive,
That is to ſay, both on, and two, and three.
And to the firſte knight right thus ſpake he.
I damned thee, thou muſt algate be ded:
And thou alſo muſt nedes leſe thyn hed,
For thou art cauſe why thy felaw deyeth.
And to the thridde knight right thus he ſeyeth,

Thou haſt not don that I commanded thee.
And thus he did do ſlen hem alle three.
Irous Cambiſes was eke dronkelew,
And ay delighted him to ben a ſhrew.
And ſo befell, a lord of his meinie,
That loved vertuous moralitee,
Sayd on a day betwix hem two right thus:
A lord is loſt, if he be vicious;
And dronkenneſſe is eke a foule record
Of any man, and namely of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere
Awaiting on a lord, and he n'ot wher.
For Goddes love drinke more attemprely:
Win maketh man to leſen wretchedly
His mind, and eke his limmes everich on.
The revers ſhalt thou ſee, quod he, anon,
And preve it by thyn owen experience,
That win ne doth to folk no ſwiche offence.
Ther is no win bereveth me my might
Of hond, ne foot, ne of min eyen ſight.
And for deſpit he dranke mochel more
An hundred part than he had don before,
And right anon, this curſed irous wretche
This knightes ſone let before him fetche,
Commanding him he ſhuld before him ſtond:
And ſodenly he took his bow in hond,

And up the ſtreng he pulled to his ere,
And with an arwe he ſlow the child right ther.
Now whether have I a ſiker hond or non?
Quod he, Is all my might and minde agon?
Hath win bereved me min eyen ſight?
What ſhuld I tell the anſwer of the knight?
His ſon was ſlain, ther is no more to ſay.
Beth ware therfore with lordes for to play,
Singeth *Placebo*, and I ſhal if I can,
But if it be unto a poure man:
To a poure man men ſhuld his vices telle,
But not to a lord, though he ſhuld go to helle.
Lo, irous Cirus, thilke Perſien,
How he deſtroyed the river of Giſen,
For that an hors of his was dreint therin,
Whan that he wente Babilon to win:
He made that the river was ſo ſmal,
That wimmen might it waden over al.
Lo, what ſaid he, that ſo wel techen can?
Ne be no felaw to non irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the way,
Leſt thee repent; I wol no forther ſay.
Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
Thou ſhalt me find as juſt, as is a ſquire;
Hold not the devils knif ay to thin herte,
Thin anger doth thee all to ſore ſmerte,

But ſhew to me all thy confeſſion.
Nay, quod the ſike man, by Seint Simon
I have ben ſhriven this day of my curat;
I have him told al holly min eſtat.
Nedeth no mo to ſpeke of it, ſayth he,
But if me liſt of min humilitee.
Yeve me than of thy gold to make our cloiſtre,
Quod he, for many a muſcle and many an oiſtre,
Whan other men han ben ful wel at eſe,
Hath been our food, our cloiſtre for to reſe:
And yet, God wot, uneth the fundament
Parfourmed is, ne of our pavement
N'is not a tile yet within our wones:
By God we owen fourty pound for ſtones.
Now help, Thomas, for him that harwed helle,
For elles mote we oure bokes ſelle,
And if ye lacke oure predication,
Than goth this world all to deſtruction.
For who ſo fro this world wold us bereve,
So God me ſave, Thomas, by your leve,
He wold bereve out of this world the ſonne.
For who can teche and worken as we conne?
And that is not of litel time, (quod he)
But ſithen Elie was, and Eliſee,
Han freres ben, that find I of record,
In charitee, ythonked be our Lord.

Now, Thomas, help for Seinte Charitee.
And doun anon he ſette him on his knee.
This ſike man woxe wel neigh wood for ire,
He wolde that the frere had ben a-fire
With his falſe diſſimulation.
Swiche thing as is in my poſſeſſion,
Quod he, that may I yeve you and non other:
Ye ſain me thus, how that I am your brother.
Ye certes, quod this frere, ye, truſteth wel;
I took our dame the letter of our ſele.
Now wel, quod he, and ſomwhat ſhal I yeve
Unto your holy covent while I live;
And in thin hond thou ſhalt it have anon,
On this condition, and other non,
That thou depart it ſo, my dere brother,
That every frere have as moche as other:
This ſhalt thou ſwere on thy profeſſion
Withouten fraud or cavilation.
I ſwere it, quod the frere, upon my faith.
And therwithall his hond in his he layth;
Lo here my faith, in me ſhal be no lak.
Than put thin hond adoun right by my bak,
Saide this man, and grope wel behind,
Benethe my buttok, ther thou ſhalte find
A thing, that I have hid in privetee.
A, thought this frere, that ſhal go with me.

And doun his hond he launcheth to the clifte,
In hope for to finden ther a gifte.
And whan this ſike man felte this frere
About his towel gropen ther and here,
Amid his hond he let the frere a fart;
Ther n'is no capel drawing in a cart,
That might han let a fart of ſwiche a ſoun.
The frere up ſterte, as doth a wood leoun:
A, falſe cherl, quod he, for Goddes bones,
This haſt thou in deſpit don for the nones:
Thou ſhalt abie this fart, if that I may.
His meinie, which that herden this affray,
Came leping in, and chaſed out the frere,
And forth he goth with a ful angry chere,
And fet his felaw, ther as lay his ſtore:
He loked as it were a wilde bore,
And grinte with his teeth, ſo was he wroth.
A ſturdy pas doun to the court he goth,
Wher as ther woned a man of gret honour,
To whom that he was alway confeſſour:
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere came, as he were in a rage,
Wher as this lord ſat eting at his bord:
Unnethes might the frere ſpeke o word,
Til atte laſt he ſaide, God you ſee.
This lord gan loke, and ſaide, *Benedicite!*

What? frere John, what maner world is this?
I ſee wel that ſom thing ther is amis;
Ye loken as the wood were ful of theves.
Sit doun anon, and tell me what your greve is,
And it ſhal ben amended, if I may.
I have, quod he, had a deſpit to day,
God yelde you, adoun in your village,
That in this world ther n'is ſo poure a page,
That he n'olde have abhominatioun
Of that I have received in youre toun:
And yet ne greveth me nothing ſo ſore,
As that the olde cherl, with lokkes hore,
Blaſphemed hath oure holy covent eke.
Now, maiſter, quod this lord, I you beſeke.
No maiſter, ſire, quod he, but ſervitour,
Though I have had in ſcole that honour.
God liketh not, that men us Rabi call,
Neither in market, ne in your large hall.
No force, quod he, but tell me all your grefe.
Sire, quod this Frere, an odious meſchefe
This day betid is to min ordre, and me,
And ſo *per conſequens* to eche degree
Of holy chirche, God amende it ſone.
Sire, quod the lord, ye wot what is to don:
Diſtempre you not, ye ben my confeſſour.
Ye ben the ſalt of the erthe, and the ſavour;

For Goddes love your patience now hold;
Telle me your grefe. And he anon him told
As ye han herd before, ye wot wel what.
The lady of the hous ay ſtille ſat,
Til ſhe had herde what the Frere ſaid.
Ey, goddes moder, quod ſhe, blisful maid,
Is ther ought elles? tell me faithfully.
Madame, quod he, how thinketh you therby?
How that me thinketh? quod ſhe; ſo God me ſpede,
I ſay, a cherle hath don a cherles dede.
What ſhuld I ſay? God let him never the;
His ſike hed is ful of vanitee;
I hold him in a maner freneſie.
Madame, quod he, by God I ſhal not lie,
But I in other wiſe may ben awreke,
I ſhal diffame him over all, ther I ſpeke;
This falſe blaſphemour, that charged me
To parten that wol not departed be,
To every man ylike, with meſchance.
The lord ſat ſtille, as he were in a trance,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun,
How had this cherl imaginatioun
To ſhewen ſwiche a probleme to the frere.
Never erſt or now ne herd I ſwiche matere;
I trow the Devil put it in his mind.
In all Arſmetrike ſhal ther no man find

Beforn this day of ſwiche a queſtion.
Who ſhulde make a demonſtration,
That every man ſhuld han ylike his part
As of a ſoun or ſavour of a fart?
O nice proude cherl, I ſhrewe his face.
Lo, ſires, quod the lord, with harde grace,
Who ever herd of ſwiche a thing or now?
To every man ylike? tell me how.
It is an impoſſible, it may not be.
Ey, nice cherl, God let him never the.
The rombling of a fart, and every ſoun,
N'is but of aire reverberatioun,
And ever it waſteth lite and lite away;
Ther n'is no man can demen, by my fay,
If that it were departed equally.
What? lo my cherl, lo yet how ſhrewedly
Unto my confeſſour to-day he ſpake;
I hold him certain a demoniake.
Now ete your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himſelf a devil way.
Now ſtood the lordes ſquier atte bord,
That carf his mete, and herde word by word
Of all this thing, of which I have you ſayd.
My lord, quod he, be ye not evil apaid,
I coude telle for a goune-cloth
To you, ſire frere, ſo that ye be not wroth,

How that this fart ſhuld even ydeled be
Amonge your covent, if it liked thee.
Tell, quod the lord, and thou ſhalt have anon
A goune-cloth, by God and by ſeint John.
My lord, quod he, whan that the weder is faire,
Withouten winde, or pertourbing of aire,
Let bring a cart-whele here into this hall,
But loke that it have his ſpokes all;
Twelf ſpokes hath a cart-whele communly;
And bring me than twelf freres, wete ye why?
For threttene is a covent as I geſſe:
Your confeſſour here for his worthineſſe
Shal parfourme up the noumbre of his covent.
Than ſhull they knele adoun by on aſſent,
And to every ſpokes end in this manere
Ful ſadly lay his noſe ſhal a frere;
Your noble confeſſour, ther God him ſave,
Shal hold his noſe upright under the nave.
Than ſhal this cherl, with bely ſtif and tought
As any tabour, hider ben ybrought;
And ſet him on the whele right of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,
And ye ſhull ſeen, up peril of my lif,
By veray preef that is demonſtratif,
That equally the ſoun of it wol wende,
And eke the ſtinke, unto the ſpokes ende,

Save that this worthy man, your confeſſour,
(Becauſe he is a man of gret honour)
Shal han the firſte fruit, as reſon is.
The noble uſage of freres yet it is,
The worthy men of hem ſhul firſt be ſerved.
And certainly he hath it wel deſerved;
He hath to-day taught us ſo mochel good,
With preching in the pulpit ther he ſtood,
That I may vouchefauf, I ſay for me,
He hadde the firſte ſmel of fartes three,
And ſo wold all his brethren hardely,
He bereth him ſo faire and holyly.

The lord, the lady, and eche man, ſave the frere,
Sayden, that Jankin ſpake in this matere
As wel as Euclide, or elles Ptholomee.
Touching the cherl, they ſayden, ſubtiltee
And highe wit made him ſpeken as he ſpake;
He n'is no fool, ne no demoniake.
And Jankin hath ywonne a newe goune;
My tale is don, we ben almoſt at toune.

THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

v. 7877—7896

Sire Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoſte ſaid,
Ye ride as ſtille and coy, as doth a maid,
Were newe ſpouſed, ſitting at the bord:
This day ne herd I of your tonge a word.
I trow ye ſtudie abouten ſom ſophime:
But Salomon ſaith, that every thing hath time.
For Goddes ſake as beth of better chere,
It is no time for to ſtudien here.
Tell us ſom mery tale by your fay;
For what man that is entred in a play,
He nedes moſt unto the play aſſent.
But precheth not, as freres don in Lent,
To make us for our olde ſinnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us not to ſlepe.
Tell us ſom mery thing of aventures,
Your termes, your coloures, and your figures,
Kepe hem in ſtore, til ſo be ye endite
Hie ſtile, as whan that men to kinges write.
Speketh ſo plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may underſtonden what ye ſay.

This worthy Clerk benignely anſwerde;
Hoſte, quod he, I am under your yerde,
Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therfore wolde I do you obeyſance,
As fer as reſon aſketh hardely:
I wol you tell a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheſte,
I pray to God ſo yeve his ſoule reſte.
Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike ſwete
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan did of philoſophie,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But deth, that wol not ſuffre us dwellen here,
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Hem both hath ſlaine, and alle we ſhul dye.
But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I began,
I ſay that firſt he with hie ſtile enditeth
(Or he the body of his tale writeth)
A proheme, in the which deſcriveth he
Piemont, and of Saluces the contree,
And ſpeketh of Apennin the hilles hie,
That ben the boundes of weſt Lumbardie:

And of mount Veſulus in ſpecial,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle ſmal
Taketh his firſte ſpringing and his ſours,
That eſtward ay encreſeth in his cours
To Emelie ward, to Ferare, and Veniſe,
The which a longe thing were to deviſe.
And trewely, as to my jugement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wol conveyen his matere:
But this is the tale which that ye mow here.

THE CLERKES TALE.

Ther is right at the Weſt ſide of Itaille
Doun at the rote of Veſulus the cold,
A luſty plain, habundant of vitaille,
Ther many a toun and tour thou maiſt behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another delitable ſighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markis whilom lord was of that lond,
As were his worthy elders him before,
And obeyſant, ay redy to his hond,

Were all his lieges, bothe leſſe and more:
Thus in delit he liveth, and hath don yore,
Beloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Both of his lordes, and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to ſpeken of linage,
The gentileſt yborne of Lumbardie,
A faire perſon, and ſtrong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curteſie:
Diſcret ynough, his contree for to gie,
Sauf in ſom thinges that he was to blame,
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he conſidered nought
In time coming what might him betide,
But on his luſt preſent was all his thought,
And for to hauke and hunt on every ſide:
Wel neigh all other cures let he ſlide,
And eke he n'old (and that was worſt of all)
Wedden no wif for ought that might befall.

Only that point his peple bare ſo ſore,
That flockmel on a day to him they went,
And on of hem, that wiſeſt was of lore,
(Or elles that the lord wold beſt aſſent
That he ſhuld tell him what the peple ment,

Or elles coud he wel ſhew ſwiche matere)
He to the markis ſaid as ye ſhull here.

O noble markis, your humanitee
Aſſureth us and yeveth us hardineſſe,
As oft as time is of neceſſitee,
That we to you mow tell our hevineſſe:
Accepteth, lord, than of your gentilleſſe,
That we with pitous herte unto you plaine,
And let your eres nat my vois diſdaine.

Al have I not to don in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as moch as ye, my lord ſo dere,
Han alway ſhewed me favour and grace,
I dare the better aſke of you a ſpace
Of audience, to ſhewen our requeſt,
And ye, my lord, to don right as you leſt.

For certes, lord, ſo wel us liketh you
And all your werke, and ever have don, that we
Ne couden not ourſelf deviſen how
We mighten live in more felicitee:
Save o thing, lord, if it your wille be,
That for to be a wedded man you leſt,
Than were your peple in ſoverain hertes reſt.

Boweth your nekke under the blisful yok
Of ſoveraintee, and not of ſerviſe,
Which that men clepen ſpouſaile or wedlok:
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtes wiſe,
How that our dayes paſſe in ſondry wiſe;
For though we ſlepe, or wake, or rome, or ride,
Ay fleth the time, it wol no man abide.

And though your grene youthe floure as yet,
In crepeth age alway as ſtill as ſton,
And deth manaſeth every age, and ſmit
In eche eſtat, for ther eſcapeth non:
And al ſo certain, as we knowe eche on
That we ſhul die, as uncertain we all
Ben of that day whan deth ſhal on us fall.

Accepteth than of us the trewe entent,
That never yet refuſeden your heſt,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wol aſſent,
Cheſe you a wife in ſhort time at the meſt,
Borne of the gentilleſt and of the beſt
Of all this lond, ſo that it oughte ſeme
Honour to God and you, as we can deme.

Deliver us out of all this beſy drede,
And take a wif, for highe Goddes ſake:

For if it ſo befell, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deth your linage ſhulde ſlake,
And that a ſtrange ſucceſſour ſhuld take
Your heritage, o! wo were us on live:
Wherfore we pray you haſtily to wive.

Hir meke praiere and hir pitous chere
Made the markis for to han pitee.
Ye wol, quod he, min owen peple dere,
To that I never er thought conſtrainen me.
I me rejoyced of my libertee,
That ſelden time is found in mariage;
Ther I was free, I moſte ben in ſervage.

But natheles I ſee your trewe entent,
And truſt upon your wit, and have don ay:
Wherfore of my free will I wol aſſent
To wedden me, as ſone as ever I may.
But ther as ye han profred me to-day
To cheſen me a wif, I you releſe
That chois, and pray you of that profer ceſe.

For God it wot, that children often ben
Unlike hir worthy eldres hem before,
Bountee cometh al of God, not of the ſtren,
Of which they ben ygendred and ybore:

I truſt in Goddes bountee, and therfore
My mariage, and min eſtat, and reſt
I him betake, he may don as him leſt.

Let me alone in cheſing of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wol endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your lif,
That what wif that I take, ye me aſſure
To worſhip hire while that hire lif may dure,
In word and werk both here and elles where,
As ſhe an emperoures doughter were.

And forthermore this ſhuln ye ſwere, that ye
Again my chois ſhul never grutch ne ſtrive.
For ſith I ſhal forgo my libertee
At your requeſt, as ever mote I thrive,
Ther as min herte is ſet, ther wol I wive:
And but ye wol aſſent in ſwiche manere,
I pray you ſpeke no more of this matere.

With hertly will they ſworen and aſſenten
To all this thing, ther ſaide not o wight nay:
Beſeching him of grace, or that they wenten,
That he wold granten hem a certain day
Of his ſpouſaile, as ſone as ever he may,

For yet alway the peple ſomwhat dred,
Leſt that this markis wolde no wif wed.

He granted hem a day, ſwiche as him leſt,
On which he wold be wedded ſikerly,
And ſaid he did all this at hir requeſt;
And they with humble herte ful buxumly
Kneling upon hir knees ful reverently
Him thonken all, and thus they han an end
Of hir entente, and home agen they wend.

And hereupon he to his officeres
Commandeth for the feſte to purvay.
And to his privee knightes and ſquieres
Swiche charge he yave, as him liſt on hem lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And eche of hem doth al his diligence
To do unto the feſte al reverence.

PARS SECUNDA.

Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable,
Wher as this markis ſhope his mariage,
Ther ſtood a thorpe, of ſighte delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir beſtes and hir herbergage,

And of hir labour toke hir ſuſtenance,
After that the erthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man,
Which that was holden poureſt of hem all:
But highe God ſomtime ſenden can
His grace unto a litel oxes ſtall:
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to ſight,
And Griſildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to ſpeke of vertuous beautee,
Than was ſhe on the faireſt under ſonne:
Ful pourely yfoſtred up was ſhe:
No likerous luſt was in hire herte yronne;
Wel ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for ſhe wolde vertue pleſe,
She knew wel labour, but non idel eſe.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the breſt of hire virginitee
Ther was encloſed ſad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde poure fader foſtred ſhe:
A few ſheep ſpinning on the feld ſhe kept,
She wolde not ben idel til ſhe ſlept.

And whan ſhe homward came, ſhe wolde bring
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which ſhe ſhred and ſethe for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing ſoft:
And ay ſhe kept hire fadres lif on loft
With every obeiſance and diligence,
That child may don to fadres reverence.

Upon Griſilde, this poure creature,
Ful often ſithe this markis ſette his eye,
As he on hunting rode paraventure:
And whan it fell that he might hire eſpie,
He not with wanton loking of folie
His eyen caſt on hire, but in ſad wiſe
Upon hire chere he wold him oft aviſe,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,
And eke hire vertue, paſſing any wight
Of ſo yong age, as wel in chere as dede.
For though the peple have no gret inſight
In vertue, he conſidered ful right
Hire bountee, and diſpoſed that he wold
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden ſhold.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellen what woman that it ſhulde be,

For which mervaille wondred many a man,
And ſaiden, whan they were in privetee,
Wol not our lord yet leve his vanitee?
Wol he not wedde? alas, alas the while!
Why wol he thus himſelf and us begile?

But natheles this markis hath do make
Of gemmes, ſette in gold and in aſure,
Broches and ringes, for Griſildes ſake,
And of hire clothing toke he the meſure
Of a maiden like unto hire ſtature,
And eke of other ornamentes all,
That unto ſwiche a wedding ſhulde fall.

The time of underne of the ſame day
Approcheth, that this wedding ſhulde be,
And all the paleis put was in array,
Both halle and chambres, eche in his degree,
Houſes of office ſtuffed with plentee
Ther mayſt thou ſee of deinteous vitaille,
That may be found, as fer as laſteth Itaille.

This real markis richely arraide,
Lordes and ladies in his compagnie,
The which unto the feſte weren praide,
And of his retenue the bachelerie,

With many a ſoun of ſondry melodie,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the righte way they hold.

Griſilde of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hire ſhapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh home as ſone as ever ſhe may.
For wel ſhe had herd ſay, that thilke day
The markis ſhulde wedde, and, if ſhe might,
She wolde fayn han ſeen ſom of that ſight.

She thought, I wol with other maidens ſtond,
That ben my felawes, in our dore, and ſee
The markiſeſſe, and therto wol I fond
To don at home, as ſone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And than I may at leiſer hire behold,
If ſhe this way unto the caſtel hold.

And as ſhe wolde over the threſwold gon,
The markis came and gan hire for to call,
And ſhe ſet doun hire water-pot anon
Beſide the threſwold in an oxes ſtall,
And doun upon hire knees ſhe gan to fall,

And with ſad countenance kneleth ſtill,
Til ſhe had herd what was the lordes will.

This thoughtful markis ſpake unto this maid
Ful ſoberly, and ſaid in this manere:
Wher is your fader, Griſildis? he ſaid.
And ſhe with reverence in humble chere
Anſwered, lord, he is al redy here.
And in ſhe goth withouten lenger lette,
And to the markis ſhe hire fáder fette.

He by the hond than toke this poure man,
And ſaide thus, whan he him had aſide:
Janicola, I neither may ne can
Lenger the pleſance of min herte hide,
If that thou voucheſauf, what ſo betide,
Thy doughter wol I take or that I wend
As for my wif, unto hire lives end.

Thou loveſt me, that wot I wel certain,
And art my faithful liegeman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare wel ſain
It liketh thee, and ſpecially therfore
Tell me that point, that I have ſaid before,
If that thou wolt unto this purpos drawe,
To taken me as for thy ſon in lawe.

This ſoden cas this man aſtoned ſo,
That red he wex, abaiſt, and al quaking
He ſtood, unnethes ſaid he wordes mo,
But only thus; Lord, quod he, my willing
Is as ye wol, ne ageins your liking
I wol no thing, min owen lord ſo dere,
Right as you liſt, governeth this matere.

Than wol I, quod this markis ſoftely,
That in thy chambre, I, and thou, and ſhe,
Have a collation, and woſt thou why?
For I wol aſk hire, if it hire wille be
To be my wif, and reule hire after me:
And all this ſhal be don in thy preſence,
I wol not ſpeke out of thin audience.

And in the chambre, while they were aboute
The tretee, which as ye ſhul after here,
The peple came into the hous withoute,
And wondred hem, in how honeſt manere
Ententifly ſhe kept hire fader dere:
But utterly Griſildis wonder might,
For never erſt ne ſaw ſhe ſwiche a ſight.

No wonder is though that ſhe be aſtoned,
To ſee ſo gret a geſt come in that place,

She never was to non ſwiche geſtes woned,
For which ſhe loked with ful pale face.
But ſhortly forth this matere for to chace,
Thiſe arn the wordes that the markis ſaid
To this benigne, veray, faithful maid.

Grifilde, he ſaid, ye ſhuln wel underſtond,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I you wedde, and eke it may ſo ſtond
As I ſuppoſe, ye wol that it ſo be:
But thiſe demaundes aſke I firſt (quod he)
That ſin it ſhal be don in haſty wiſe,
Wol ye aſſent, or elles you aviſe?

I ſay this, be ye redy with good herte
To all my luſt, and that I freely may
As me beſt thinketh do you laugh or ſmerte,
And never ye to grutchen, night ne day,
And eke whan I ſay ya, ye ſay not nay,
Neither by word, ne frouning countenance?
Swere this, and here I ſwere our alliance.

Wondring upon this thing, quaking for drede,
She ſaide; Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I, to thilke honour, that ye me bede,
But as ye wol yourſelf, right ſo wol I:

And here I ſwere, that never willingly
In werk, ne thought, I n'ill you diſobeie
For to be ded, though me were loth to deie.

This is ynough, Griſilde min, quod he.
And forth he goth with a ful ſobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after than came ſhe,
And to the peple he ſaid in this manere:
This is my wif, quod he, that ſtondeth here,
Honoureth her, and loveth hire, I pray,
Who ſo me loveth, ther n'is no more to ſay.

And for that nothing of hire olde gere
She ſhulde bring into his hous, he bad
That women ſhuld deſpoilen hire right there,
Of which thiſe ladies weren nothing glad
To handle hire clothes wherin ſhe was clad:
But natheles this maiden bright of hew
Fro foot to hed they clothed han all new.

Hire heres han they kempt, that lay untreſſed
Ful rudely, and with hir fingres ſmal
A coroune on hire hed they han ydreſſed,
And ſette hire ful of nouches gret and ſmal:
Of hire array what ſhuld I make a tale?

Unneth the peple hire knew for hire fairneſſe,
Whan ſhe tranſmewed was in ſwiche richeſſe.

This markis hath hire ſpouſed with a ring
Brought for the ſame cauſe, and than hire ſette
Upon an hors ſnow-white, and wel ambling,
And to his paleis, or he lenger lette,
(With joyful peple, that hire lad and mette)
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they ſpende
In revel, til the ſonne gan deſcende.

And ſhortly forth this tale for to chace,
I ſay, that to this newe markiſeſſe
God hath ſwiche favour ſent hire of his grace,
That it ne ſemeth not by likelineſſe
That ſhe was borne and fed in rudeneſſe,
As in a cote, or in an oxes ſtall,
But nouriſhed in an emperoures hall.

To every wight ſhe waxen is ſo dere,
And worſhipful, that folk ther ſhe was bore,
And fro hire birthe knew hire yere by yere,
Unnethes trowed they, but dorſt han ſwore,
That to Janicle, of which I ſpake before,
She doughter n'as, for as by conjecture
Hem thoughte ſhe was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was ſhe,
She was encreſed in ſwiche excellence
Of thewes good, yſet in high bountee,
And ſo diſcrete, and faire of eloquence,
So benigne, and ſo digne of reverence,
And coude ſo the peples herte enbrace,
That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face.

Not only of Saluces in the toun
Publiſhed was the bountee of hire name,
But eke beſide in many a regioun,
If on ſaith wel, another ſaith the ſame:
So ſpredeth of hire hie bountee the fame,
That men and women, yong as wel as old,
Gon to Saluces upon hire to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but really,
Wedded with fortunat honeſtetee,
In Goddes pees liveth ful eſily
At home, and grace ynough outward had he:
And for he ſaw that under low degree
Was honeſt vertue hid, the peple him held
A prudent man, and that is ſeen ful ſeld.

Not only this Griſildis thurgh hire wit
Coude all the fete of wifly homlineſſe,

But eke whan that the cas required it,
The comune profit coude ſhe redreſſe:
Ther n'as diſcord, rancour, ne hevineſſe
In all the lond, that ſhe ne coude appeſe,
And wiſely bring hem all in hertes eſe.

Though that hire huſbond abſent were or non,
If gentilmen, or other of that contree
Were wroth, ſhe wolde bringen hem at on,
So wiſe and ripe wordes hadde ſhe,
And jugement of ſo gret equitee,
That ſhe from heven ſent was, as men wend,
Peple to ſave, and every wrong to amend.

Not longe time after that this Griſilde
Was wedded, ſhe a doughter hath ybore,
All had hire lever han borne a knave child:
Glad was the markis and his folk therfore,
For though a maiden childe come all before,
She may unto a knave child atteine
By likelyhed, ſin ſhe n'is not barreine.

PARS TERTIA.

Ther fell, as it befalleth times mo,
Whan that this childe had ſouked but a throwe,

This markis in his herte longed ſo
To tempt his wif, hire ſadneſſe for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This marveillous deſir his wif to aſſay,
Needles, God wot, he thought hire to affray.

He had aſſaied hire ynough before,
And found hire ever good, what nedeth it
Hire for to tempt, and alway more and more?
Though ſom men praiſe it for a ſubtil wit,
But as for me, I ſay that evil it ſit
To aſſay a wif whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in anguiſh and in drede.

For which this markis wrought in this manere;
He came a-night alone ther as ſhe lay
With ſterne face, and with ful trouble chere,
And ſayde thus; Griſilde, (quod he) that day
That I you toke out of your poure array,
And put you in eſtat of high nobleſſe,
Ye han it not forgotten, as I geſſe.

I ſay, Griſilde, this preſent dignitee,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you toke in poure eſtat ful low,

For ony wele ye mote yourſelven know.
Take hede of every word that I you ſay,
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tway.

Ye wote yourſelf wel how that ye came here
Into this hous, it is not long ago,
And though to me ye be right lefe and dere,
Unto my gentils ye be nothing ſo:
They ſay, to hem it is gret ſhame and wo
For to be ſuggetes, and ben in ſervage
To thee, that borne art of a ſmal linage.

And namely ſin thy doughter was ybore,
Thiſe wordes han they ſpoken douteles,
But I deſire, as I have don before,
To live my lif with hem in reſt and pees:
I may not in this cas be reccheles;
I mote do with thy doughter for the beſt,
Not as I wold, but as my gentils leſt.

And yet, God wote, this is ful loth to me:
But natheles withouten youre weting
I wol nought do, but thus wol I (quod he)
That ye to me aſſenten in this thing.
Shew now youre patience in youre werking,

That ye me hight and ſwore in youre village
The day that maked was our mariage.

Whan ſhe had herd all this, ſhe not ameved
Neyther in word, in chere, ne countenance,
(For as it ſemed, ſhe was not agreved)
She ſayde; Lord, all lith in your plefance,
My child and I, with hertely obeiſance
Ben youres all, and ye may ſave or ſpill,
Your owen thing: werketh after your will.

Ther may no thing, ſo God my ſoule ſave,
Like unto you, that may diſpleſen me:
Ne I deſire nothing for to have,
Ne drede for to leſe, ſauf only ye:
This will is in myn herte, and ay ſhal be,
No length of time, or deth may this deface,
Ne change my corage to an other place.

Glad was this markis for hire anſwering,
But yet he feined as he were not ſo,
Al drery was his chere and his loking,
Whan that he ſhuld out of the chambre go.
Sone after this, a furlong way or two,
He prively hath told all his entent
Unto a man, and to his wif him ſent.

A maner ſergeant was this prive man,
The which he faithful often founden had
In thinges gret, and eke ſwiche folk wel can
Don execution on thinges bad:
The lord knew wel, that he him loved and drad.
And whan this ſergeant wiſt his lordes will,
Into the chambre he ſtalked him ful ſtill.

Madame, he ſayd, ye mote foryeve it me,
Though I do thing, to which I am conſtreined:
Ye ben ſo wiſe, that right wel knowen ye,
That lordes heſtes may not ben yfeined,
They may wel be bewailed and complained,
But men mote nedes to hir luſt obey,
And ſo wol I, ther n'is no more to ſay.

This child I am commanded for to take.
And ſpake no more, but out the child he hent
Deſpitouſly, and gan a chere to make,
As though he wold have ſlain it, or he went.
Griſildis moſt al ſuffer and al conſent:
And as a lambe, ſhe ſitteth meke and ſtill,
And let this cruel ſergeant do his will.

Suſpecious was the diffame of this man,
Suſpect his face, ſuſpect his word alſo,

Suſpect the time in which he this began:
Alas! hire doughter, that ſhe loved ſo,
She wende he wold han ſlaien it right tho,
But natheles ſhe neither wept ne ſiked,
Conforming hire to that the markis liked.

But at the laſt to ſpeken ſhe began,
And mekely ſhe to the ſergeant praid
(So as he was a worthy gentil man)
That ſhe might kiſſe hire child, or that it deid:
And in hire barme this litel child ſhe leid,
With ful ſad face, and gan the child to bliſſe,
And lulled it, and after gan it kiſſe.

And thus ſhe ſayd in hire benigne vois:
Farewel, my child, I ſhal thee never ſee,
But ſin I have thee marked with the crois,
Of thilke fader ybleſſed mote thou be,
That for us died upon a crois of tree:
Thy ſoule, litel child, I him betake,
For this night ſhalt thou dien for my ſake.

I trow that to a norice in this cas
It had ben hard this routhe for to ſee:
Wel might a moder than han cried alas,
But natheles ſo ſad ſtedfaſt was ſhe,

That ſhe endured all adverſitee,
And to the ſergeant mekely ſhe ſayde,
Have here agen your litel yonge mayde.

Goth now (quod ſhe) and doth my lordes heſt:
And o thing wold I pray you of your grace,
But if my lord forbade you at the leſt,
Burieth this litel body in ſom place,
That beſtes ne no briddes it to-race.
But he no word to that purpos wold ſay,
But toke the child and went upon his way.

This ſergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Griſildes wordes and hire chere
He told him point for point, in ſhort and plain,
And him preſented with his doughter dere.
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos held he ſtill,
As lordes don, whan they wol have hir will,

And bad this ſergeant that he prively
Shulde this child ful ſofte wind and wrappe,
With alle circumſtances tendrely,
And carry it in a cofre, or in a lappe;
But upon peine his hed of for to ſwappe

That no man ſhulde know of his entent,
Ne whens he came, ne whider that he went;

But at Boloigne, unto his ſuſter dere,
That thilke time of Pavie was counteſſe,
He ſhuld it take, and ſhew hire this matere,
Beſeching hire to don hire beſineſſe
This child to foſtren in all gentilleſſe,
And whos child that it was he bade hire hide
From every wight, for ought that may betide.

This ſergeant goth, and hath fulfilde this thing.
But to this marquis now retorne we;
For now goth he ful faſt imagining,
If by his wives chere he mighte ſee,
Or by hire wordes apperceive, that ſhe
Were changed, but he never coud hire finde,
But ever in on ylike ſad and kinde.

As glad, as humble, as beſy in ſervice
And eke in love, as ſhe was wont to be,
Was ſhe to him, in every maner wiſe;
Ne of hire doughter not a word ſpake ſhe:
Non accident for non adverſitee
Was ſeen in hire, ne never hire doughters name
Ne nevened ſhe, for erneſt ne for game.

PARS QUARTA.

In this eſtat ther paſſed ben foure yere
Er ſhe with childe was, but, as God wold,
A knave childe ſhe bare by this Waltere
Ful gracious, and fair for to behold:
And whan that folk it to his fader told,
Not only he, but all his contree mery
Was for this childe, and God they thonke and hery.

Whan it was two yere old, and from the breſt
Departed of his norice, on a day
This markis caughte yet another leſt
To tempte his wif yet ofter, if he may.
O! nedeles was ſhe tempted in aſſay.
But wedded men ne connen no meſure,
Whan that they finde a patient creature.

Wif, quod this markis, ye han herd or this
My peple ſikely beren our mariage,
And namely ſin my ſone yboren is,
Now is it werſe than ever in al our age:
The murmur ſleth myn herte and my corage,
For to myn eres cometh the vois ſo ſmerte,
That it wel nie deſtroyed hath myn herte.

Now ſay they thus, whan Walter is agon,
Than ſhal the blood of Janicle ſuccede,
And ben our lord, for other han we non:
Swiche wordes ſayn my peple, it is no drede.
Wel ought I of ſwiche murmur taken hede,
For certainly I drede al ſwiche ſentence,
Though they not plainen in myn audience.

I wolde live in pees, if that I might:
Wherfore I am diſpoſed utterly,
As I his ſuſter ſerved er by night,
Right ſo thinke I to ſerve him prively.
This warne I you, that ye not ſodenly
Out of yourſelf for no wo ſhuld outraie,
Beth patient, and therof I you praie.

I have, quod ſhe, ſayd thus and ever ſhal,
I wol no thing, ne n'ill no thing certain,
But as you liſt: not greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my ſone be ſlain
At your commandement: that is to ſain,
I have not had no part of children twein,
But firſt ſikeneſſe, and after wo and peine.

Ye ben my lord, doth with your owen thing
Right as you liſt, aſketh no rede of me:

For as I left at home al my clothing
Whan I came firſt to you, right ſo (quod ſhe)
Left I my will and al my libertee,
And toke your clothing: wherfore I you prey,
Doth your pleſance, I wol youre luſt obey.

And certes, if I hadde preſcience
Your will to know, er ye your luſt me told,
I wold it do withouten negligence:
But now I wote your luſt, and what ye wold,
All your pleſance ferme and ſtable I hold,
For wiſt I that my deth might do you eſe,
Right gladly wold I dien, you to pleſe.

Deth may not maken no compariſoun
Unto your love. And whan this markis ſay
The conſtance of his wif, he caſt adoun
His eyen two, and wondreth how ſhe may
In patience ſuffer al this array:
And forth he goth with drery contenance,
But to his herte it was ful gret pleſance.

This ugly ſergeant in the ſame wife
That he hire doughter caughte, right ſo he
(Or werſe, if men can any werſe deviſe)
Hath hent hire ſone, that ful was of beautee:

And ever in on ſo patient was ſhe,
That ſhe no chere made of hevineſſe,
But kiſt hire ſone and after gan it bleſſe.

Save this ſhe praied him, if that he might,
Hire litel ſone he wold in erthe grave,
His tendre limmes, delicat to fight,
Fro foules and fro beſtes for to ſave.
But ſhe non anſwer of him mighte have,
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it brought.

This markis wondreth ever lenger the more
Upon hire patience, and if that he
Ne hadde ſothly knowen therbefore,
That parfitly hire children loved ſhe,
He wold han wend that of ſom ſubtiltee
And of malice, or for cruel corage,
That ſhe had ſuffred this with ſad viſage.

But wel he knew, that next himſelf, certain
She loved hire children beſt in every wiſe.
But now of women wold I aſken fayn,
If thiſe aſſaies mighten not ſuffiſe;
What coud a ſturdy huſbond more deviſe

To preve hire wifhood, and hire ſtedfaſtneſſe,
And he continuing ever in ſturdineſſe?

But ther ben folk of ſwiche condition,
That, whan they han a certain purpos take,
They can not ſtint of hir intention,
But, right as they were bounden to a ſtake,
They wol not of hir firſte purpos ſlake:
Right ſo this markis fully hath purpoſed
To tempt his wif, as he was firſt diſpoſed.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance
That ſhe to him was changed of corage:
But never coud he finden variance,
She was ay on in herte and in viſage,
And ay the further that ſhe was in age,
The more trewe (if that it were poſſible)
She was to him in love, and more penible.

For which it ſemed thus, that of hem two
Ther was but o will; for as Walter leſt,
The ſame luſt was hire pleſance alſo;
And God be thanked, all fell for the beſt.
She ſhewed wel, for no worldly unreſt
A wif, as of hireſelf, no thing ne ſholde
Wille in effect, but as hire huſbond wolde.

The ſclandre of Walter wonder wide ſpradde,
That of a cruel herte he wikkedly,
For he a poure woman wedded hadde,
Hath murdred both his children prively:
Swich murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is: for to the peples ere
Ther came no word, but that they murdred were.

For which ther as his peple therbefore
Had loved him wel, the ſclandre of his diffame
Made hem that they him hateden therfore:
To ben a murdrour is an hateful name.
But natheles, for erneſt ne for game,
He of his cruel purpos n'olde ſtente,
To tempt his wif was ſette all his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yere was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in ſubtil wiſe
Enformed of his will, ſent his meſſage,
Commanding him, ſwiche billes to deviſe,
As to his cruel purpos may ſuffiſe,
How that the pope, as for his peples reſt,
Bade him to wed another, if him leſt.

I ſay he bade, they ſhulden contrefete
The popes bulles, making mention

That he hath leve his firſte wif to lete,
As by the popes diſpenſation,
To ſtinten rancour and diſſenſion
Betwix his peple and him: thus ſpake the bull,
The which they han publisſhed at the full.

The rude peple, as no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel, that it had ben right ſo:
But whan thiſe tidings came to Griſildis,
I deme that hire herte was ful of wo;
But ſhe ylike ſad for evermo
Diſpoſed was, this humble creature,
The adverſitee of fortune al to endure;

Abiding ever his luſt and his pleſance,
To whom that ſhe was yeven, herte and al,
As to hire veray worldly ſuffiſance.
But ſhortly if this ſtorie tell I ſhal,
This markis writen hath in ſpecial
A lettre, in which he ſheweth his entente,
And ſecretly he to Boloigne it ſente,

To the erl of Pavie, which that hadde tho
Wedded his ſuſter, prayed he ſpecially
To bringen home agein his children two
In honourable eſtat al openly:

But o thing he him prayed utterly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquere,
Shulde not tell whos children that they were,

But ſay, the maiden ſhuld ywedded be
Unto the markis of Saluces anon.
And as this erl was prayed, ſo did he,
For at day ſette he on his way is gon
Toward Saluces, and lordes many on
In rich arraie, this maiden for to gide,
Hire yonge brother riding hire befide.

Arraied was toward hire mariage
This freſhe maiden, ful of gemmes clere,
Hire brother, which that ſeven yere was of age,
Arraied eke ful freſh in his manere:
And thus in gret nobleſſe and with glad chere
Toward Saluces ſhaping hir journay
Fro day to day they riden in hir way.

PARS QUINTA.

Among al this, after his wicked uſage,
This markis yet his wif to tempten more
To the uttereſte prefe of hire corage,
Fully to have experience and lore,

If that ſhe were as ſtedefaſt as before,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boiſtouſly hath ſaid hire this ſentence:

Certes, Griſilde, I had ynough pleſance
To han you to my wif, for your goodneſſe,
And for your trouthe, and for your obeyſance,
Not for your linage, ne for your richeſſe,
But now know I in veray ſothfaſtneſſe,
That in gret lordſhip, if I me wel aviſe,
Ther is gret ſervitude in ſondry wiſe.

I may not don, as every ploughman may:
My peple me conſtreineth for to take
Another wif, and crien day by day;
And eke the pope rancour for to ſlake
Conſenteth it, that dare I undertake:
And trewely, thus moche I wol you ſay,
My newe wif is coming by the way.

Be ſtrong of herte, and voide anon hire place,
And thilke dower that ye broughten me
Take it agen, I grant it of my grace.
Returneth to your fadres hous, (quod he)
No man may alway have proſperitee.

With even herte I rede you to endure
The ſtroke of fortune, or of aventure.

And ſhe agen anſwerd in patience:
My lord, quod ſhe, I wote, and wiſt alway,
How that betwixen your magnificence
And my poverte no wight ne can ne may
Maken compariſon, it is no nay;
I ne held me never digne in no manere
To be your wif, ne yet your chamberere.

And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witneſſe,
And all ſo wiſly he my ſoule glad)
I never held me lady ne maiſtreſſe,
But humble ſervant to your worthineſſe,
And ever ſhal, while that my lif may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye ſo longe of your benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobley,
Wheras I was not worthy for to be,
That thanke I God and you, to whom I prey
Foryelde it you, ther is no more to ſey:
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with him dwell unto my lives ende;

Ther I was foſtred of a childe ful ſmal,
Til I be ded my lif ther wol I lede,
A widew clene in body, herte and al.
For ſith I yave to you my maidenhede,
And am your trewe wif, it is no drede,
God ſhilde ſwiche a lordes wif to take
Another man to huſbond or to make.

And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte you wele and proſperite:
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For ſith it liketh you, my lord, (quod ſhe)
That whilom weren all myn hertes reſt,
That I ſhal gon, I wol go whan you leſt.

But ther as ye me profre ſwiche dowaire
As I firſt brought, it is wel in my mind,
It were my wretched clothes, nothing faire,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goode God! how gentil and how kind
Ye ſemed by your ſpeche and your viſage,
The day that maked was oure marriage!

But ſoth is ſaid, algate I find it trewe,
For in effect it preved is on me,

Love is not old, as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for non adverſitee
To dien in this cas, it ſhal not be
That ever in word or werke I ſhal repent,
That I you yave min herte in hole entent.

My lord, ye wote, that in my fadres place
Ye dide me ſtripe out of my poure wede,
And richely ye clad me of your grace;
To you brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakedneſſe, and maidenhede;
And here agen your clothing I reſtore,
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

The remenant of your jeweles redy be
Within your chambre, I dare it ſafly ſain:
Naked out of my fadres hous (quod ſhe)
I came, and naked I mote turne again.
All your pleſance wolde I folwe fain:
But yet I hope it be not your entent,
That I ſmokles out of your paleis went.

Ye coude not do ſo diſhoneſt a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children lay,
Shulde before the peple, in my walking,
Be ſeen al bare: wherfore I you pray

Let me not like a worme go by the way:
Remembre you, min owen lord ſo dere,
I was your wif, though I unworthy were.

Wherfore in guerdon of my maidenhede,
Which that I brought and not agen I bere,
As vouchefauf to yeve me to my mede
But ſwiche a ſmok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrie the wombe of hire
That was your wif: and here I take my leve
Of you, min owen lord, left I you greve.

The ſmok, quod he, that thou haſt on thy bake,
Let it be ſtill, and bere it forth with thee.
But wel unnethes thilke word he ſpake,
But went his way for routhe and for pitee.
Before the folk hireſelven ſtripeth ſhe,
And in hire ſmok, with foot and hed al bare,
Toward hire fadres hous forth is ſhe fare.

The folk hire folwen weping in hir wey,
And fortune ay they curſen as they gon:
But ſhe fro weping kept hire eyen drey,
Ne in this time word ne ſpake ſhe non.
Hire fader, that this tiding herd anon,

Curſeth the day and time, that nature
Shope him to ben a lives creature.

For out of doute this olde poure man
Was ever in ſuſpect of hire mariage:
For ever he demed, ſin it firſt began,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corage,
Him wolde thinke it were a diſparage
To his eſtat, ſo lowe for to alight,
And voiden hire as ſone as ever he might.

Agein his doughter haſtily goth he,
(For he by noiſe of folk knew hire coming)
And with hire olde cote, as it might be,
He covereth hire ful ſorwefully weping:
But on hire body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By daies fele than at hire mariage.

Thus with hire fader for a certain ſpace
Dwelleth this flour of wifly patience,
That nother by hire wordes ne hire face,
Beforn the folk, ne eke in hir abſence,
Ne ſhewed ſhe that hire was don offence,
Ne of hire high eſtat no remembrance
Ne hadde ſhe, as by hire contenance.

No wonder is, for in hire gret eſtat
Hire goſt was ever in pleine humilitee;
No tendre mouth, no herte delicat,
No pompe, no ſemblant of realtee;
But ful of patient benignitee,
Diſcrete, and prideles, ay honourable,
And to hire huſbond ever meke and ſtable.

Men ſpeke of Job, and moſt for his humbleſſe,
As clerkes, whan hem liſt, can wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in ſothfaſtneſſe,
Though clerkes preiſen women but a lite,
Ther can no man in humbleſſe him acquite
As woman can, ne can be half ſo trewe
As women ben, but it be falle of newe.

PARS SEXTA.

Fro Boloigne is this erl of Pavie come,
Of which the fame up ſprang to more and leſſe:
And to the peples eres all and ſome
Was couth eke, that a newe markiſeſſe
He with him brought, in ſwiche pomp and richeſſe
That never was ther ſeen with mannes eye
So noble array in al Weſt Lumbardie.

The markis, which that ſhope and knew all this,
Er that this erl was come, ſent his meſſage
For thilke poure ſely Griſildis;
And ſhe with humble herte and glad viſage,
Not with no ſwollen thought in hire corage,
Came at his heſt, and on hire knees hire ſette,
And reverently and wiſely ſhe him grette.

Griſilde, (quod he) my will is utterly,
This maiden, that ſhal wedded be to me,
Received be to-morwe as really
As it poſſible is in myn hous to be:
And eke that every wight in his degree
Have his eſtat in ſitting and ſervice,
And high pleſance, as I can beſt deviſe.

I have no woman ſuffiſant certain
The chambres for to array in ordinance
After my luſt, and therfore wolde I fain,
That thin were all ſwiche manere governance:
Thou knoweſt eke of old all my pleſance;
Though thin array be bad, and evil beſey,
Do thou thy devoir at the leſte wey.

Not only, lord, that I am glad (quod ſhe)
To don your luſt, but I deſire alſo

You for to ſerve and pleſe in my degree,
Withouten fainting, and ſhal evermo:
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne ſhal the goſt within myn herte ſtente
To love you beſt with all my trewe entente.

And with that word ſhe gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to ſette, and beddes make,
And peined hire to don all that ſhe might,
Praying the chambereres for Goddes ſake
To haſten hem, and faſte ſwepe and ſhake,
And ſhe the moſte ſerviceable of all
Hath every chambre arraied, and his hall.

Abouten undern gan this erl alight,
That with him brought thiſe noble children twey;
For which the peple ran to ſee the ſight
Of hir array, ſo richely beſey:
And than at erſt amonges hem they ſey,
That Walter was no fool, though that him leſt
To change his wif; for it was for the beſt.

For ſhe is fairer, as they demen all,
Than is Griſilde, and more tendre of age,
And fairer fruit betwene hem ſhulde fall,
And more pleſant for hire high linage:

Hire brother eke ſo faire was of viſage,
That hem to ſeen the peple hath caught pleſance,
Commending now the markis governance.

O ſtormy peple, unſad and ever untrewe,
And undiſcrete, and changing as a fane,
Delighting ever in rombel that is newe,
For like the mone waxen ye and wane:
Ay ful of clapping, dere ynough a jane,
Your dome is fals, your conſtance evil preveth,
A ful gret fool is he that on you leveth.

Thus ſaiden ſade folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gaſed up and doun:
For they were glad, right for the noveltee,
To have a newe lady of hir toun.
No more of this make I now mentioun,
But to Griſilde agen I wol me dreſſe,
And telle hire conſtance, and hire beſineſſe.

Ful beſy was Griſilde in every thing,
That to the feſte was appertinent;
Right naught was ſhe abaiſt of hire clothing,
Though it were rude, and ſomdel eke to-rent,
But with glad chére to the yate is went

With other folk, to grete the markiſeſſe,
And after that doth forth hire beſineſſe.

With ſo glad chere his geſtes ſhe receiveth,
And conningly everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man apperceiveth,
But ay they wondren what ſhe mighte be,
That in ſo poure array was for to ſee,
And coude ſwiche honour and reverence,
And worthily they preiſen hire prudence.

In all this mene while ſhe ne ſtent
This maide and eke hire brother to commend
With all hire herte in ful benigne entent,
So wel, that no man coud hire preiſe amend:
But at the laſt whan that thiſe lordes wend
To ſitten doun to mete, he gan to call
Griſilde, as ſhe was beſy in the hall.

Griſilde, (quod he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wif, and hire beautee?
Right wel, my lord, quod ſhe, for in good fay,
A fairer ſaw I never non than ſhe:
I pray to God yeve you proſperitee;
And ſo I hope, that he wol to you ſend
Pleſance ynough unto your lives end.

O thing beſeche I you and warne alſo,
That ye ne prikke with no turmenting
This tendre maiden, as ye han do mo:
For ſhe is foſtred in hire noriſhing
More tendrely, and to my ſuppoſing
She mighte not adverſitee endure,
As coude a poure foſtred creature.

And whan this Walter ſaw hire patience,
Hire glade chere, and no malice at all,
And he ſo often hadde hire don offence,
And ſhe ay ſade and conſtant as a wall,
Continuing ever hire innocence over all,
This ſturdy markis gan his herte dreſſe
To rewe upon hire wifly ſtedefaſtneſſe.

This is ynough, Griſilde min, quod he,
Be now no more agaſt, ne evil apaid,
I have thy faith and thy benignitee,
As wel as ever woman was, aſſaid
I gret eſtat, and pourelich arraied:
Now know I, dere wif, thy ſtedefaſtneſſe,
And hire in armes toke, and gan to keſſe.

And ſhe for wonder toke of it no kepe;
She herde not what thing he to hire ſaid:

She ferde as ſhe had ſtert out of a ſlepe,
Til ſhe out of hire maſedneſſe abraid.
Griſilde, quod he, by God that for us deid,
Thou art my wif, non other I ne have,
Ne never had, as God my ſoule ſave.

This is thy doughter, which thou haſt ſuppoſed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Shal be min heir, as I have ay diſpoſed;
Thou bare hem of thy body trewely:
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively:
Take hem agen, for now maiſt thou not ſay,
That thou haſt lorn non of thy children tway.

And folk, that otherwiſe han ſaid of me,
I warne hem wel, that I have don this dede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for to aſſay in thee thy womanhede:
And not to ſlee my children (God forbede)
But for to kepe hem prively and ſtill,
Til I thy purpos knew, and all thy will.

Whan ſhe this herd aſwoune doun ſhe falleth
For pitous joye, and after hire ſwouning
She both hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes pitouſly weping

Embraceth hem, and tendrely kiſſing
Ful like a moder with hire ſalte teres
She bathed both hir viſage and hir heres.

O, which a pitous thing it was to ſee
Hire ſwouning, and hire humble vois to here!
Grand mercy, lord, God thank it you (quod ſhe)
That ye han ſaved me my children dere:
Now rekke I never to be ded right here,
Sin I ſtond in your love, and in your grace,
No force of deth, ne whan my ſpirit pace.

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children mine,
Your woful mother wened ſtedfaſtly,
That cruel houndes, or ſom foul vermine
Had eten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tendrely
Hath don you kepe: and in that ſame ſtound
Al ſodenly ſhe ſwapt adoun to ground.

And in hire ſwough ſo ſadly holdeth ſhe
Hire children two, whan ſhe gan hem embrace,
That with gret ſleight and gret difficultee
The children from hire arm they gan arrace
O! many a tere on many a pitous face

Doun ran of hem that ſtoden hire beſide,
Unnethe abouten hire might they abide.

Walter hire gladeth, and hire ſorwe ſlaketh,
She riſeth up abaſhed from hire trance,
And every wight hire joye and feſte maketh,
Til ſhe hath caught agen hire contenance.
Walter hire doth ſo faithfully pleſance,
That it was deintee for to ſeen the chere
Betwix hem two, ſin they ben met in fere.

Thiſe ladies, whan that they hir time ſey,
Han taken hire, and into chambre gon,
And ſtripen hire out of hire rude arrey,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte ſhone,
With a coroune of many a riche ſtone
Upon hire hed, they into hall hire broughte:
And ther ſhe was honoured as hire ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful end;
For every man, and woman, doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to diſpend,
Til on the welkin ſhone the ſterres bright;
For more ſolempne in every mannes ſight
This feſte was, and greter of coſtage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yere in high proſperitee
Liven thiſe two in concord and in reſt,
And richely his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthieſt
Of all Itaille, and than in pees and reſt
His wives fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the ſoule out of his body crepeth.

His ſone ſuccedeth in his heritage,
In reſt and pees, after his fadres day:
And fortunat was eke in mariage,
Al put he not his wif in gret affay:
This world is not ſo ſtrong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde times yore,
And herkneth, what this auctour ſaith therfore.

This ſtory is ſaid, not for that wives ſhuld
Folwe Griſilde, as in humilitee,
For it were importable, tho they wold;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shulde be conſtant in adverſitee,
As was Griſilde, therfore Petrark writeth
This ſtorie, which with high ſtile he enditeth.

For ſith a woman was ſo patient
Unto a mortal man, wel more we ought

Receiven all in gree that God us ſent.
For gret ſkill is he preve that he wrought:
But he ne tempteth no man that he bought,
As ſaith ſeint Jame, if ye his piſtell rede;
He preveth folk al day, it is no drede:

And ſuffreth us, as for our exerciſe,
With ſharpe ſcourges of adverſitee
Ful often to be bete in ſondry wiſe;
Not for to know our will, for certes he,
Or we were borne, knew all our freeletee;
And for our beſt is all his governance;
Let us than live in vertuous ſuffrance.

But o word, lordings, herkeneth, or I go:
It were ful hard to finden now adayes
In all a toun Griſildes three or two:
For if that they were put to ſwiche aſſayes,
The gold of hem hath now ſo bad alayes
With bras, that though the coine be faire at eye,
It wolde rather braſt atwo than plie.

For which here, for the wives love of Bathe,
Whos lif and al hire ſecte God maintene
In high maiſtrie, and elles were it ſcathe,
I wol with luſty herte freſhe and grene,

Say you a ſong to gladen you, I wene:
And let us ſtint of erneſtful matere.
Herkneth my ſong, that ſaith in this manere.

Griſilde is ded, and eke hire patience,
And both at ones buried in Itaille:
For which I crie in open audience,
No wedded man ſo hardy be to aſſaille
His wives patience, in truſt to find
Griſildes, for in certain he ſhal faille.

O noble wives, ful of high prudence,
Let non humilitee your tonges naile:
Ne let no clerk have cauſe or diligence
To write of you a ſtorie of ſwiche mervaille,
As of Griſildis patient and kinde,
Leſt Chichevache you ſwalwe in hire entraille.

Folweth ecco, that holdeth no ſilence,
But ever anſwereth at the countretaille:
Beth not bedaffed for your innocence,
But ſharply taketh on you the governaille:
Emprenteth wel this leſſon in your minde,
For comun profit, ſith it may availle.

Ye archewives, ſtondeth ay at defence,

Sin ye be ſtrong, as is a gret camaille,
Ne ſuffreth not, that men do you offence.
And ſclendre wives, feble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tigre yond in Inde;
Ay clappeth as a mill, I you counſaille.

Ne drede hem not, doth hem no reverence,
For though thin huſbond armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his breſt, and eke his aventaille:
In jalouſie I rede eke thou him binde,
And thou ſhalt make him couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be faire, ther folk ben in preſence
Shew thou thy viſage, and thin apparaille:
If thou be foule, be free of thy diſpence,
To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille:
Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
And let him care, and wepe, and wringe, and waille.

THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

v. 9089—9108

Weping and wailing, care and other ſorwe
I have ynough, on even and on morwe,
Quod the marchant, and ſo have other mo,
That wedded ben; I trowe that it be ſo:
For wel I wot it fareth ſo by me.
I have a wif, the werſte that may be,
For though the fend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde him overmatche I dare wel ſwere.
What ſhulde I you reherſe in ſpecial
Hire high malice? ſhe is a ſhrew at al.

Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Griſildes grete patience,
And of my wif the paſſing crueltee.
Were I unbounden, all ſo mote I the,
I wolde never eft comen in the ſnare.
We wedded men live in ſorwe and care,
Aſſay it who ſo wol, and he ſhal finde
That I ſay ſoth, by ſeint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I ſay not alle;
God ſhilde that it ſhulde ſo befalle.

A, good ſire hoſte, I have ywedded be
Thiſe monethes two, and more not parde;
And yet I trowe that he, that all his lif
Wifles hath ben, though that men wolde him rife
Into the herte, ne coude in no manere
Tellen ſo much ſorwe, as I you here
Coud tellen of my wives curſedneſſe.

Now, quod our hoſte, marchant, ſo God you bleſſe,
Sin ye ſo mochel knowen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray you tell us part.

Gladly, quod he, but of min owen ſore
For ſory herte I tellen may no more.

THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Whilom ther was dwelling in Lumbardie
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie
In which he lived in gret proſperitee;
And ſixty yere a wifles man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delit
On women, ther as was his appetit,
As don thiſe fooles that ben ſeculere.
And whan that he was paſſed ſixty yere,

Were it for holineſſe or for dotage,
I cannot ſain, but ſwiche a gret corage
Hadde this knight to ben a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
To eſpien, wher that he might wedded be;
Praying our lord to granten him, that he
Mighte ones knowen of that blisful lif,
That is betwix an huſbond and his wif,
And for to live under that holy bond,
With which God firſte man and woman bond.
Non other lif (ſaid he) is worth a bene:
For wedlok is ſo eſy and ſo clene,
That in this world it is a paradiſe.
Thus ſaith this olde knight, that was ſo wiſe.

And certainly, as ſoth as God is king,
To take a wif, it is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hore,
Than is a wif the fruit of his treſore;
Than ſhuld he take a yong wif and a faire,
On which he might engendren him an heire,
And lede his lif in joye and in ſolas,
Wheras thiſe bachelers ſingen alas,
Whan that they finde any adverſitee
In love, which n'is but childiſh vanitee.
And trewely it ſit wel to be ſo,
That bachelers have often peine and wo:

On brotel ground they bilde, and brotelneſſe
They finden, whan they wenen ſikerneſſe:
They live but as a bird or as a beſte,
In libertee and under non areſte,
Ther as a wedded man in his eſtat
Liveth a lif blisful and ordinat,
Under the yoke of mariage ybound:
Wel may his herte in joye and bliſſe abound.
For who can be ſo buxom as a wif?
Who is ſo trewe and eke ſo ententif
To kepe him, ſike and hole, as is his make?
For wele or wo ſhe n'ill him not forſake:
She n'is not wery him to love and ſerve,
Though that he lie bedrede til that he ſterve.
And yet ſom clerkes ſain, it is not ſo,
Of which he Theophraſt is on of tho:
What force though Theophraſt liſt for to lie?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for huſbondrie,
As for to ſpare in houſhold thy diſpence:
A trewe ſervant doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than doth thin owen wif,
For ſhe wol claimen half part al hire lif.
And if that thou be ſike, ſo God me ſave,
Thy veray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe thee bet than ſhe, that waiteth ay
After thy good, and hath don many a day.

This ſentence, and an hundred things werſe
Writeth this man ther God his bones curſe.
But take no kepe of al ſwiche vanitee,
Defieth Theophraſt, and herkeneth me.
A wif is Goddes yefte veraily;
All other maner yeftes hardely,
As londes, rentes, paſture, or commune,
Or mebles, all ben yeftes of fortune,
That paſſen as a ſhadow on the wall:
But drede thou not, if plainly ſpeke I ſhal,
A wif wol laſt and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than thee liſt paraventure.
Mariage is a ful gret ſacrament;
He which that hath no wif I hold him ſhent;
He liveth helples, and all deſolat:
(I ſpeke of folk in ſeculer eſtat)
And herkneth why, I ſay not this for nought,
That woman is for mannes helpe ywrought.
The highe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And ſaw him al alone belly naked,
God of his grete goodneſſe ſaide than,
Let us now make an helpe unto this man
Like to himſelf, and than he made him Eve.
Here may ye ſee, and hereby may ye preve,
That a wif is mannes helpe and his comfort,
His paradis terreſtre and his diſport:

So buxom and ſo vertuous is ſhe,
They moſten nedes live in unitee:
O fleſh they ben, and o fleſh, as I geſſe,
Hath but on herte in wele and in diſtreſſe.
A wif? a! ſeinte Marie, *benedicite*,
How might a man have any adverſite
That hath a wif? certes I cannot ſeye.
The bliſſe the which that is betwix hem tweye
Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be poure, ſhe helpeth him to ſwinke;
She kepeth his good, and waſteth never a del;
All that hire huſbond doth, hire liketh wel;
She ſaith not ones nay, whan he ſaith ye;
Do this, ſaith he; al redy, ſire, ſaith ſhe.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious,
Thou art ſo mery, and eke ſo vertuous,
And ſo commended, and approved eke,
That every man that holt him worth a leke,
Upon his bare knees ought all his lif
Thanken his God, that him hath ſent a wif,
Or elles pray to God him for to ſend
A wif, to laſt unto his lives end.
For than his lif is ſet in ſikerneſſe,
He may not be deceived, as I geſſe,
So that he werche after his wives rede;
Than may he boldly beren up his hede,

They ben ſo trewe, and therwithal ſo wiſe.
For which, if thou wilt werchen as the wiſe,
Do alway ſo, as women wol thee rede.
Lo how that Jacob, as thiſe clerkes rede,
By good conſeil of his mother Rebekke
Bounde the kiddes ſkin about his nekke;
For which his fadres beniſon he wan.
Lo Judith, as the ſtorie eke tell can,
By good conſeil ſhe Goddes peple kept,
And ſlow him Holofernes while he ſlept.
Lo Abigail, by good conſeil how ſhe
Saved hire huſbond Nabal, whan that he
Shuld han be ſlain. And loke, Heſter alſo
By good conſeil delivered out of wo
The peple of God, and made him Mardochee
Of Aſſuere enhaunſed for to be.
Ther n'is no thing in gree ſuperlatif
(As ſaith Senek) above an humble wif.
Suffer thy wives tonge, as Caton bit,
She ſhal command, and thou ſhalt ſuffren it,
And yet ſhe wol obey of curteſie.
A wif is keper of thin huſbondrie:
Wel may the ſike man bewaile and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wif the hous to kepe.
I warne thee, if wiſely thou wilt werche,
Love wel thy wif, as Criſt loveth his cherche:

If thou loveſt thyſelf, love thou thy wif.
No man hateth his fleſh, but in his lif
He foſtreth it, and therfore bid I thee
Cheriſh thy wif, or thou ſhalt never the.
Huſbond and wif, what ſo men jape or play,
Of worldly folk holden the ſiker way:
They ben ſo knit, ther may non harm betide,
And namely upon the wives ſide.

For which this January, of whom I told,
Conſidered hath within his dayes old
The luſty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage hony-ſwete.
And for his frendes on a day he ſent
To tellen hem th' effect of his entent.

With face ſad, his tale he hath hem told:
He ſayde, frendes, I am hore and old,
And almoſt (God wot) on my pittes brinke,
Upon my ſoule ſomwhat moſt I thinke.
I have my body folily diſpended,
Bleſſed be God that it ſhal ben amended:
For I wol ben certain a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haſt I can.
Unto ſom maiden, faire and tendre of age,
I pray you ſhapeth for my mariage
All ſodenly, for I wol not abide:
And I wol fonde to eſpien on my ſide,

To whom I may be wedded haſtily.
But for as moche as ye ben more than I,
Ye ſhullen rather ſwiche a thing eſpien
Than I, and wher me beſte were to allien.
But o thing warn I you, my frendes dere,
I wol non old wif han in no manere:
She ſhal not paſſen twenty yere certain.
Old fiſh and yonge fleſh wold I have fain.
Bet is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,
And bet than old beef is the tendre veel.
I wol no woman thirty yere of age,
It is but beneſtraw and gret forage.
And eke thiſe olde widewes (God it wote)
They connen ſo moch craft on Wades bote,
So mochel broken harm whan that hem left,
That with hem ſhuld I never live in reſt.
For ſondry ſcoles maken ſubtil clerkes;
Woman of many ſcoles half a clerk is.
But certainly, a yong thing men may gie,
Right as men may warm wax with handes plie.
Wherfore I ſay you plainly in a clauſe,
I wol non old wif han right for this cauſe.
For if ſo were I hadde ſwiche meſchance,
That I in hire ne coude have no pleſance,
Than ſhuld I lede my lif in avoutrie,
And ſo ſtreight to the devil whan I die.

Ne children ſhuld I non upon hire geten:
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that min heritage ſhulde fall
In ſtraunge hondes: and this I tell you all.
I dote not, I wot the cauſe why
Men ſhulden wedde: and furthermore wot I,
Ther ſpeketh many a man of mariage,
That wot no more of it than wot my page,
For which cauſes a man ſhuld take a wif.
If he ne may not liven chaſt his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devotion,
Becauſe of leful procreation
Of children, to the honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they ſhulden lecherie eſchue,
And yeld hir dette whan that it is due:
Or for that eche of hem ſhuld helpen other
In meſchefe, as a ſuſter ſhal the brother,
And live in chaſtitee ful holily.
But, ſires, (by your leve) that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,
I fele my limmes ſtark and ſuffiſant
To don all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myſelven beſt what I may do.
Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tre,
That bloſmeth er the fruit ywoxen be;

The bloſmy tre n'is neither drie ne ded:
I fele me no wher hoor but on my hed.
Min herte and all my limmes ben as grene,
As laurer thurgh the yere is for to ſene.
And ſin that ye han herd all min entent,
I pray you to my will ye wolde aſſent.

Diverſe men diverſely him told
Of mariage many enſamples old;
Som blamed it, ſom praiſed it certain;
But atte laſte, ſhortly for to ſain,
(As all day falleth altercation
Betwixen frendes in diſputiſon)
Ther fell a ſtrif betwix his brethren two,
Of which that on was cleped Placebo,
Juſtinus ſothly called was that other.

Placebo ſayd; O January brother,
Ful litel nede han ye, my lord ſo dere,
Conſeil to aſke of any that is here:
But that ye ben ſo ful of ſapience,
That you ne liketh for your high prudence,
To weiven fro the word of Salomon.
This word ſayd he unto us everich on;
Werke alle thing by conſeil, thus ſayd he,
And than ne ſhalt thou not repenten thee.
But though that Salomon ſpake ſwiche a word,
Min owen dere brother and my lord,

So wisly God my soule bringe at rest,
I hold your owen conseil is the best.
For, brother min, take of me this motif,
I have now ben a court-man all my lif,
And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have stonden in ful gret degree
Abouten lordes of ful high estat:
Yet had I never with non of hem debat,
I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it firme and stable,
I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
A ful gret fool is any conseillour,
That serveth any lord of high honour,
That dare presume, or ones thinken it,
That his conseil shuld passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye han yourselven shewed here to-day
So high sentence, so holily, and wel,
That I consent, and confirme every del
Your wordes all, and your opinioun.
By God ther n'is no man in all this toun
Ne in Itaille, coud bet han ysayd:
Crist holt him of this conseil wel apaid.
And trewely it is an high corage
Of any man that stopen is in age,

To take a young wif, by my fader kin :
Your herte hongeth on a joly pin.
Doth now in this matere right as you left,
For finally I hold it for the beſt.
Juſtinus, that ay ſtille ſat and herd,
Right in this wiſe he to Placebo anſwerd.
Now, brother min, be patient I pray,
Sin ye han ſaid, and herkneth what I ſay.
Senek among his other wordes wiſe
Saith, that a man ought him right wel aviſe,
To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.
And ſith I ought aviſen me right wel,
To whom I yeve my good away fro me,
Wel more I ought aviſen me, parde,
To whom I yeve my body : for alway
I warne you wel it is no childes play
To take a wif without aviſement.
Men muſt enqueren (this is min aſſent)
Wheder ſhe be wiſe and ſobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or elles other waies a ſhrew,
A chideſter, or a waſtour of thy good,
Or riche or poure, or elles a man is wood.
Al be it ſo, that no man finden ſhal
Non in this world, that trotteth hol in al,
Ne man, ne beſte, ſwiche as men can deviſe,
But natheles it ought ynough ſuffice

With any wif, if ſo were that ſhe had
Mo goode thewes, than hire vices bad:
And all this axeth leiſer to enquere.
For God it wot, I have wept many a tere
Ful prively, ſin that I had a wif.
Praiſe who ſo wol a wedded mannes lif,
Certain I find in it but coſt and care,
And obſervances of alle bliſſes bare.
And yet, God wot, my neighebours aboute,
And namely of women many a route,
Sain that I have the moſte ſtedefaſt wif,
And eke the mekeſt on that bereth lif.
But I wot beſt, wher wringeth me my ſho.
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.
Aviſeth you, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage;
And namely with a yong wif and a faire.
By him that made water, fire, erthe, and aire,
The yongeſt man, that is in all this route,
Is beſy ynow to bringen it aboute
To han his wif alone, truſteth me:
Ye ſhul not pleſen hire fully yeres three,
This is to ſain, to don hire ful pleſance.
A wif axeth ful many an obſervance.
I pray you that ye be not evil apaid.
Wel, quod this January, and haſt thou ſaide?

Straw for Senek, and ſtraw for thy proverbes,
I counte not a panier ful of herbes
Of ſcole termes; wiſer men than thou,
As thou haſt herd, aſſented here right now
To my purpos: Placebo, what ſaye ye?
I ſay it is a curſed man, quod he,
That letteth matrimoine ſikerly.
And with that word they riſen ſodenly,
And ben aſſented fully, that he ſholde
Be wedded whan him liſt, and wher he wolde.
High fantaſie and curious beſineſſe
Fro day to day gan in the ſoule empreſſe
Of January about his mariage.
Many a faire ſhap, and many a faire viſage
Ther paſſeth thurgh his herte night by night.
As who ſo toke a mirrour poliſhed bright,
And ſet it in a comune market place,
Than ſhuld he ſee many a figure pace
By his mirrour, and in the ſame wiſe
Gan January in with his thought deviſe
Of maidens, which that dwelten him beſide:
He wiſte not wher that he might abide.
For if that on have beautee in hire face,
Another ſtont ſo in the peples grace
For hire ſadneſſe and hire benignitee,
That of the peple the greteſt vois hath ſhe:

And ſom were riche and hadden a bad name.
But natheles, betwix erneſt and game,
He at the laſt appointed him on on,
And let all other from his herte gon,
And chees hire of his owen auctoritee,
For love is blind all day, and may not ſee.
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,
He purtreied in his herte and in his thought
Hire freſhe beautee, and hire age tendre,
Hire middel ſmal, hire armes long and ſclendre,
Hire wiſe governance, hire gentilleſſe,
Hire womanly bering, and hire ſadneſſe.
And whan that he on hire was condeſcended,
Him thought his chois it might not ben amended;
For whan that he himſelf concluded had,
Him thought eche other mannes wit ſo bad,
That impoſſible it were to replie
Again his chois; this was his fantaſie.
His frendes ſent he to, at his inſtance,
And praied hem to don him that pleſance,
That haſtily they wolden to him come;
He wolde abregge hir labour all and ſome:
Neded no more to hem to go ne ride,
He was appointed ther he wolde abide.
Placebo came, and eke his frendes ſone,
And alderfirſt he bade hem all a bone,

That non of hem non argumentes make
Again the purpos that he hath ytake:
Which purpos was plesant to God (said he)
And veray ground of his prosperitee.

He said, ther was a maiden in the toun,
Which that of beautee hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, she were of smal degree,
Sufficeth him hire youth and hire beautee:
Which maid (he said) he wold han to his wif
To lede in ese and holinesse his lif:
And thanked God, that he might han hire all,
That no wight with his blisse parten shall:
And praied hem to labour in this nede,
And shapen that he faille not to spede.
For than, he sayd, his spirit was at ese;
Than is (quod he) nothing may me displese,
Save o thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I wol rehersе in your presence.

I have (quod he) herd said ful yore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two,
This is to say, in erthe and eke in heven.
For though he kepe him fro the sinnes seven,
And eke from every branch of thilke tree,
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee,
And so gret ese and luft in mariage,
That ever I am agaft now in min age,

That I ſhal leden now ſo mery a lif,
So delicat, withouten wo or ſtrif,
That I ſhal han min heven in erthe here.
For ſin that veray heven is bought ſo dere
With tribulation and gret penance,
How ſhuld I than, living in ſwiche pleſance
As alle wedded men don with hir wives,
Come to the bliſſe, ther Criſt eterne on live is?
This is my drede, and ye, my brethren tweie,
Aſſoileth me this queſtion I preie.

Juſtinus, which that hated his folie,
Anſwerd anon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrege,
He wolde non auctoritee allege,
But ſayde, ſire, ſo ther be non obſtacle
Other than this, God of his hie miracle,
And of his mercy may ſo for you werche,
That er ye have your rights of holy cherche,
Ye may repent of wedded mannes lif,
In which ye ſain ther is no wo ne ſtrif:
And elles God forbede, but if he ſent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Wel often, rather than a ſingle man.
And therfore, ſire, the beſt rede that I can,
Deſpeire you not, but haveth in memorie,
Paraventure ſhe may be your purgatorie;

She may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than ſhal your ſoule up unto heven ſkippe
Swifter than doth an arow of a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye ſhal know,
That ther n'is non ſo gret felicitee
In mariage, ne never more ſhal be,
That you ſhal let of your ſalvation,
So that ye uſe, as ſkill is and reſon,
The luſtes of your wif attemprely,
And that ye pleſe hire nat to amorouſly:
And that ye kepe you eke from other ſinne.
My tale is don, for my wit is but thinne.
Beth not agaſt hereof, my brother dere,
But let us waden out of this matere.
The wif of Bathe; if ye han underſtonde,
Of mariage, which ye now han in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel ſpace:
Fareth now wel, God have you in his grace.
And with this word this Juſtine and his brother
Han take hir leve, and eche of hem of other.
And whan they ſaw that it muſt nedes be,
They wroughten ſo by ſleighte and wiſe tretee,
That ſhe this maiden, which that Maius hight,
As haſtily as ever that ſhe might,
Shal wedded be unto this January.
I trow it were to longe you to tary,

If I you told of every ſcript and bond,
By which that ſhe was feoffed in his lond;
Or for to rekken of hire rich array.
But finally ycomen is the day,
That to the chirche bothe ben they went,
For to receive the holy ſacrament.
Forth cometh the preeſt, with ſtole about his nekke,
And bade hire be like Sara and Rebekke,
In wiſdome and in trouthe of mariage:
And ſayd his oriſons, as is uſage,
And crouched hem, and bade God ſhuld hem bleſſe,
And made all ſiker ynow with holineſſe.
Thus ben they wedded with ſolempnitee;
And at the feſte ſitteth he and ſhe
With other worthy folk upon the deis.
Al ful of joye and bliſſe is the paleis,
And ful of inſtruments, and of vitaille,
The moſte deinteous of all Itaille.
Beforn hem ſtood ſwiche inſtruments of ſoun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,
Ne maden never ſwiche a melodie.
At every cours in came loude minſtralcie,
That never Joab tromped for to here,
Ne he Theodomas yet half ſo clere
At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.
Bacchus the win hem ſkinketh al aboute,

And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
(For January was become hire knight,
And wolde bothe aſſaien his corage
In libertee, and eke in mariage)
And with hire firebrond in hire hond aboute
Danceth before the bride and all the route.
And certainly I dare right wel ſay this,
Ymeneus, that God of wedding is,
Saw never his lif ſo mery a wedded man.

Hold thou thy pees, thou poet Marcian,
That writeſt us that ilke wedding mery
Of hire Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the ſonges that the Muſes ſonge:
To ſmal is both thy pen and eke thy tonge
For to deſcriven of this mariage.
Whan tendre youth hath wedded ſtouping age,
Ther is ſwiche mirth that it may not be writen;
Aſſaieth it yourſelf, than may ye witen
If that I lie or non in this matere.

Maius, that ſit with ſo benigne a chere,
Hire to behold it ſemed faerie,
Quene Heſter loked never with ſwiche an eye
On Aſſuere, ſo meke a look hath ſhe,
I may you not deviſe all hire beautee;
But thus moch of hire beautee tell I may,
That ſhe was like the brighte morwe of May

Fulfilled of all beautee, and pleſance.
This January is raviſhed in a trance,
At every time he loketh in hire face,
But in his herte he gan hire to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hire ſtreine
Harder than ever Paris did Heleine.
But natheles yet had he gret pitee
That thilke night offenden hire muſt he,
And thought, alas, o tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighten wel endure
All my corage, it is ſo ſharpe and kene;
I am agaſt ye ſhal it nat ſuſtene.
But God forbede, that I did all my might.
Now wolde God that it were waxen night,
And that the night wold laſten ever mo.
I wold that all this peple were ago.
And finally he doth all his labour,
As he beſt mighte, ſaving his honour,
To haſte hem fro the mete in ſubtil wiſe.
The time came that reſon was to riſe,
And after that men dance, and drinken faſt,
And ſpices all about the hous they caſt,
And ful of joyè and bliſſe is every man,
All but a ſquier, that highte Damian,
Which carf beforn the knight ful many a day:
He was ſo raviſht on his lady May,

That for the veray peine he was nie wood;
Almoſt he ſwelt, and ſwouned ther he ſtood:
So ſore hath Venus hurt him with hire brond,
As that ſhe bare it dancing in hire hond.
And to his bed he went him haſtily;
No more of him as at this time ſpeke I;
But ther I let him wepe ynow and plaine,
Til freſhe May wol rewen on his peine.

O perilous fire, that in the bedſtraw bredeth!
O famuler fo, that his ſervice bedeth!
O ſervant traitour, falſe of holy hewe,
Like to the nedder in boſom ſlie untrewe,
God ſhelde us alle from your acquaintance!
O January, dronken in pleſance
Of mariage, ſee how thy Damian,
Thin owen ſquier and thy boren man,
Entendeth for to do thee vilanie:
God grante thee thin homly fo to eſpie.
For in this world n'is werſe peſtilence,
Than homly fo, all day in thy preſence.

Parformed hath the ſonne his arke diurne,
No longer may the body of him ſojourne
On the oriſont, as in that latitude:
Night with his mantel, that is derke and rude,
Gan overſprede the Hemiſperie aboute:
For which departed is this luſty route

Fro January, with thank on every ſide.
Home to hir houſes luſtily they ride,
Ther as they don hir thinges, as hem left,
And whan they ſaw hir time gon to reſt.
Sone after that this haſtif January
Wol go to bed, he wol no longer tary.
He drinketh Ipocras, clarre, and vernage
Of ſpices hot, to encreſen his corage:
And many a letuarie had he ful fine,
Swiche as the curſed mònk dan Conſtantine
Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;
To ete hem all he wolde nothing eſchue:
And to his privee frendes thus ſayd he:
For Goddes love, as ſone as it may be,
Let voiden all this hous in curteis wiſe.
And they han don right as he wol deviſe.
Men drinken, and the travers drawe anon;
The bride is brought a-bed as ſtill as ſton;
And whan the bed was with the preeſt yblefſed,
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dreſſed,
And January hath faſt in armes take
His freſhe May, his paradis, his make.
He lulleth hire, he kiſſeth hire ful oft;
With thicke briſtles of his berd unſoft,
Like to the ſkin of houndfiſh, ſharp as brere,
(For he was ſhave al newe in his manere)

He rubbeth hire upon hire tendre face,
And ſayde thus; Alas! I mote treſpace
To you, my ſpouſe, and you gretly offend,
Or time come that I wol doun deſcend.
But natheles conſidereth this, (quod he)
Ther n'is no werkman, whatſoever he be,
That may both werken wel and haſtily:
This wol be don at leiſer parfitly.
It is no force how longe that we play;
In trewe wedlok coupled be we tway;
And bleſſed be the yoke that we ben inne,
For in our actes may ther be no ſinne.
A man may do no ſinne with his wif,
Ne hurt himſelven with his owen knif:
For we have leve to play us by the lawe.
Thus laboureth he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he taketh a ſop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bed than ſitteth he.
And after that he ſang ful loud and clere,
And kiſt his wif, and maketh wanton chere.
He was al coltiſh, ful of ragerie,
And ful of jergon, as a flecked pie.
The ſlacke ſkin about his necke ſhaketh,
While that he ſang, ſo chanteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hire herte,
Whan ſhe him ſaw up ſitting in his ſherte

In his night cap, and with his necke lene:
She praiſeth not his playing worth a bene.
Than ſayd he thus; my reſte wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake;
And doun he layd his hed and ſlept til prime.
And afterward, whan that he ſaw his time,
Up riſeth January, but freſhe May
Held hire in chambre til the fourthe day,
As uſage is of wives for the beſte.
For every labour ſomtime moſte han reſte,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to ſay, no lives creature,
Be it of fiſh, or brid, or beſt, or man.

Now wol I ſpeke of woful Damian,
That langureth for love, as ye ſhul here;
Therfore I ſpeke to him in this manere.
I ſay, O ſely Damian, alas!
Anſwer to this demand, as in this cas,
How ſhalt thou to thy lady freſhe May
Tellen thy wo? She wol alway ſay nay;
Eke if thou ſpeke, ſhe wol thy wo bewrein;
God be thin help, I can no better ſein.

This ſike Damian in Venus fire
So brenneth, that he dieth for deſire;
For which he put his lif in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wiſe endure,

But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wrote he all his ſorwe,
In manere of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freſhe lady May.
And in a purſe of ſilk, heng on his ſherte,
He hath it put, and layd it at his herte.
The mone that at none was thilke day
That January hath wedded freſhe May
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden;
So long hath Maius in hire chambre abiden,
As cuſtome is unto thiſe nobles alle.
A bride ſhal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes four or three dayes at the leſte
Ypaſſed ben, than let hire go to feſte.
The fourthe day complete fro none to none,
Whan that the highe meſſe was ydone,
In halle ſat this January and May,
As freſh as is the brighte ſomers day.
And ſo befel, how that this goode man
Remembred him upon this Damian,
And ſayde; Seinte Marie, how may it be,
That Damian entendeth not to me?
Is he ay ſike? or how may this betide?
His ſquiers, which that ſtoden ther beſide,
Excuſed him, becauſe of his ſikneſſe,
Which letted him to don his beſineſſe:

Non other cauſe mighte make him tary.
That me forthinketh, quod this January;
He is a gentil ſquier by my trouthe,
If that he died, it were gret harme and routhe.
He is as wiſe, diſcret, and as ſecree,
As any man I wote of his degree,
And therto manly and eke ſerviſable,
And for to ben a thrifty man right able.
But after mete as ſone as ever I may
I wol myſelfe viſite him, and eke May,
To don him all the comfort that I can.
And for that word him bleſſed every man,
That of his bountee and his gentilleſſe
He wolde ſo comforten in ſikneſſe
His ſquier, for it was a gentil dede.
Dame, quod this January, take good hede,
At after mete, ye with your women alle,
(Whan that ye ben in chambre out of this halle)
That all ye gon to ſee this Damian:
Doth him diſport, he is a gentil man,
And telleth him that I wol him viſite,
Have I no thing but reſted me a lite:
And ſpede you faſte, for I wol abide
Til that ye ſlepen faſte by my ſide.
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A ſquier, that was marſhal of his halle,

And told him certain thinges that he wolde.
This freſhe May hath ſtreight hire way yholde
With all hire women unto Damian.
Doun by his beddes ſide ſit ſhe than,
Comforting him as goodly as ſhe may.
This Damian, whan that his time he ſay,
In ſecree wiſe, his purſe, and eke his bill,
In which that he ywritten had his will,
Hath put into hire hond withouten more,
Save that he ſiked wonder depe and ſore,
And ſoftely to hire right thus ſayd he;
Mercie, and that ye nat diſcover me:
For I am ded, if that this thing be kid.
This purſe hath ſhe in with hire boſome hid,
And went hire way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January ycome is ſhe,
That on his beddes ſide ſate ful ſoft.
He taketh hire, and kiſſeth hire ful oft:
And layd him doun to ſlepe, and that anon.
She feined hire, as that ſhe muſte gon
Ther as ye wote that every wight mot nede;
And whan ſhe of this bill hath taken hede,
She rent it all to cloutes at the laſt,
And in the privee ſoftely it caſt.
Who ſtudieth now but faire freſhe May?
Adoun by olde January ſhe lay,

That ſlepte, til the cough hath him awaked:
Anon he prayd hire ſtripen hire al naked,
He wolde of hire, he ſaid, have ſom pleſance;
And ſaid, hire clothes did him encombrance.
And ſhe obeieth him, be hire lefe or loth.
But leſt that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wrought, I dare nat to you tell,
Or wheder hire thought it paradis or hell;
But ther I let hem werken in hir wiſe
Til eveſong rang, and that they muſt ariſe.

Were it by deſtinee, or aventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or conſtellation, that in ſwiche eſtat
The heven ſtood at that time fortunat,
As for to put a bill of Venus werkes
(For alle thing hath time, as ſayn thiſe clerkes)
To any woman for to get hire love,
I cannot ſay, but grete God above,
That knoweth that non act is cauſeles,
He deme of all, for I wol hold my pees.
But ſoth is this, how that this freſhe May
Hath taken ſwiche impreſſion that day
Of pitee on this ſike Damian,
That fro hire herte ſhe ne driven can
The remembrance for to don him eſe.
Certain (thought ſhe) whom that this thing diſpleſe

I rekke not, for here I him aſſure,
To love him beſt of any creature,
Though he no more hadde than his ſherte.
Lo, pitee renneth ſone in gentil herte.
Here may ye ſeen, how excellent franchiſe
In women is whan they hem narwe aviſe.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many on,
That hath an herte as hard as any ſton,
Which wold han lette him ſterven in the place
Wel rather than han granted him hire grace:
And hem rejoycen in hir cruel pride,
And rekken not to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,
Right of hire hond a lettre maketh ſhe,
In which ſhe granteth him hire veray grace;
Ther lacked nought, but only day and place,
Wher that ſhe might unto his luſt ſuffice:
For it ſhal be, right as he wol deviſe.
And whan ſhe ſaw hire time upon a day
To viſiten this Damian goth this May,
And ſotilly this lettre doun ſhe threſt
Under his pilwe, rede it if him leſt.
She taketh him by the hond, and hard him twiſt
So ſecretly, that no wight of it wiſt,
And bade him ben all hol, and forth ſhe went
To January, whan he for hire ſent.

Up riſeth Damian the nexte morwe,
Al paſſed was his ſikneſſe and his ſorwe.
He kembeth him, he proineth him and piketh,
He doth all that his lady luſt and liketh;
And eke to January he goth as lowe,
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is ſo pleſant unto every man,
(For craft is all, who ſo that don it can)
That every wight is ain to ſpeke him good;
And fully in his ladies grace he ſtood.
Thus let I Damian about his nede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.
Som clerkes holden that felicitee
Stant in delit, and therfore certain he
This noble January, with all his might
In honeſt wiſe as longeth to a knight,
Shope him to liven ful deliciouſly.
His houſing, his array, as honeſtly
To his degree was maked as a kinges.
Amonges other of his honeſt thinges
He had a gardin walled all with ſton,
So fayre a gardin wote I no wher non.
For out of doute I verailly ſuppoſe,
That he that wrote the Romant of the Roſe,
Ne coude of it the beautee wel deviſe:
Ne Priapus ne mighte not ſuffiſe,

Though he be god of gardins, for to tell
The beautee of the gardin, and the well,
That ſtood under a laurer alway grene.
Ful often time he Pluto and his quene
Proſerpina, and alle hir faerie,
Diſporten hem and maken melodie
About that well, and daunced, as men told.

This noble knight, this January the old
Swiche deintee hath in it to walke and pley,
That he wol ſuffre no wight bere the key,
Sauf he himſelf, for of the ſmal wiket
He bare alway of ſilver a cliket,
With which whan that him liſt he it unſhette.
And whan that he wold pay his wives dette
In ſomer ſeſon thider wold he go,
And May his wif, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not don a-bedde,
He in the gardin parfourmed hem and ſpedde.

And in this wiſe many a mery day
Lived this January and freſhe May,
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.

O ſoden hap, o thou fortune unſtable,
Like to the Scorpion ſo deceivable,
That flatreſt with thy hed whan thou wolt ſting;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin enveniming.

O brotel joye, o ſwete poyſon queinte,
O monſtre, that ſo ſotilly canſt peinte
Thy giftes, under hewe of ſtedfaſtneſſe,
That thou deceiveſt bothe more and leſſe,
Why haſt thou January thus deceived,
That haddeſt him for thy ful frend received?
And now thou haſt beraft him both his eyen,
For ſorwe of which deſireth he to dyen.
Alas! this noble January free,
Amidde his luſt and his proſperitee
Is waxen blind, and that al ſodenly.
He wepeth and he waileth pitouſly;
And therwithall, the fire of jalouſie
(Leſt that his wif ſhuld fall in ſom folie)
So brent his herte, that he wolde fain,
That ſom man had both him and hire yſlain;
For nother after his deth, ne in his lif,
Ne wold he that ſhe were no love ne wif,
But ever live as a widewe in clothes blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath loſt hire make.
But at the laſt, after a moneth or tway
His ſorwe gan aſſwagen, ſoth to ſay.
For whan he wiſt it might non other be,
He patiently toke his adverſitee:
Save out of doute he ne may nat forgon,
That he n'as jalous ever more in on:

Which jalouſie it was ſo outrageous,
That neither in halle, ne in non other hous,
Ne in non other place never the mo
He n'olde ſuffre hire for to ride or go,
But if that he had honde on hire alway.
For which ful often wepeth freſhe May,
That loveth Damian ſo brenningly,
That ſhe moſte either dien ſodenly,
Or elles ſhe moſte han him as hire left:
She waited whan hire herte wold to-breſt.

Upon that other ſide Damian
Becomen is the ſowefulleſt man
That ever was, for neither night ne day
Ne might he ſpeke a word to freſhe May,
As to his purpos of no ſwiche matere,
But if that January muſt it here,
That had an hand upon hire evermo.
But natheles, by writing to and fro,
And privee ſignes, wiſt he what ſhe ment,
And ſhe knew eke the fin of his entent.

O January, what might it thee availe,
Though thou might ſeen, as fer as ſhippes ſaile?
For as good is blind to deceived be,
As be deceived, whan a man may ſee.
Lo Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For all that ever he coude pore or prien,

Yet was he blent, and, God wot, ſo ben mo,
That wenen wiſly that it be not ſo:
Paſſe over is an eſe, I ſay no more.
This freſhe May, of which I ſpake of yore,
In warm wex hath enprented the cliket,
That January bare of the ſmal wiket,
By which into his gardin oft he went;
And Damian that knew all hire entent
The cliket contrefeted prively;
Ther n'is no more to ſay, but haſtily
Som wonder by this cliket ſhal betide,
Which ye ſhul heren, if ye wol abide.
O noble Ovide, ſoth ſayeſt thou, God wote,
What ſleight is it if love be long and hote,
That he n'ill find it out in ſom manere?
By Pyramus and Thiſbe may men lere;
Though they were kept ful long and ſtreit over all,
They ben accorded, rowning thurgh a wall,
Ther no wight coude han founden ſwiche a ſleighte.
But now to purpos; er that daies eighte
Were paſſed of the month of Juil, befill,
That January hath caught ſo gret a will,
Thurgh egging of his wif, him for to play
In his gardin, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morwe unto this May ſaid he;
Riſe up, my wif, my love, my lady free;

The turtles vois is herd, myn owen ſwete;
The winter is gon, with all his raines wete.
Come forth now with thin eyen columbine.
Wel fairer ben thy breſts than ony wine.
The gardin is encloſed all aboute;
Come forth, my white ſpouſe, for out of doute,
Thou haſt me wounded in myn herte, o wif:
No ſpot in thee n'as never in all thy lif.
Come forth, and let us taken our diſport,
I cheſe thee for my wif and my comfort.
Swiche olde lewed wordes uſed he.
On Damian a ſigne made ſhe,
That he ſhuld go before with his cliket.
This Damian hath opened the wiket,
And in he ſtert, and that in ſwiche manere,
That no wight might him ſee neyther yhere,
And ſtill he ſit under a buſh. Anon
This January, as blind as is a ſton,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into this freſhe gardin is ago,
And clapped to the wiket ſodenly.
Now, wif, quod he, here n'is but thou, and I,
That art the creature that I beſt love:
For by that lord that ſit in heven above,
I hadde lever dien on a knif,
Than thee offenden, dere trewe wif.

For Goddes ſake, thinke how I thee chees,
Not for no covetiſe douteles,
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old and may not ſee,
Beth to me trewe, and I wol tell you why;
Certes three thinges ſhal ye win therby;
Firſt love of Criſt, and to yourſelf honour,
And all min heritage, toun and tour.
I yeve it you, maketh chartres as you leſt:
This ſhal be don to-morwe er ſonne reſt,
So wiſly God my ſoule bring to bliſſe;
I pray you on this covenant ye me kiſſe.
And though that I be jalous, wite me nought;
Ye ben ſo depe enprented in my thought,
That whan that I conſider your beautee,
And therwithall the unlikely elde of me,
I may not certes, though I ſhulde die,
Forbere to ben out of your compagnie
For veray love; this is withouten doute:
Now kiſſe me, wif, and let us rome aboute.

This freſhe May, whan ſhe thiſe wordes herd,
Benignely to January anſwerd,
But firſt and forward ſhe began to wepe:
I have, quod ſhe, a ſoule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and alſo min honour,
And of my wifhood thilke tendre flour.

Which that I have aſſured in your hond,
Whan that the preeſt to you my body bond:
Wherfore I wol anſwere in this manere,
With leve of you, myn owen lord ſo dere.
I pray to God that never daw that day,
That I ne ſterve, as foule as woman may,
If ever I do unto my kin that ſhame,
Or elles I empeire ſo my name,
That I be falſe; and if I do that lakke,
Do ſtripen me and put me in a ſakke,
And in the nexte river do me drenche:
I am a gentil woman, and no wenche.
Why ſpeke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And women han repreſe of you ay newe.
Ye con non other daliance, I leve,
But ſpeke to us as of untruſt and repreve.
And with that word ſhe ſaw wher Damian
Sat in the buſh, and coughen ſhe began;
And with hire finger a ſigne made ſhe,
That Damian ſhuld climbe up on a tre,
That charged was with fruit, and up he went:
For veraily he knew all hire entent,
And every ſigne that ſhe coude make,
Wel bet than January hire owen make.
For in a lettre ſhe had told him all
Of this matere, how that he werken ſhall.

And thus I let him ſitting in the pery,
And January and May roming ful mery.
Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;
Phebus of gold his ſtremes doun hath ſent
To gladen every flour with his warmneſſe;
He was that time in *Geminis*, I geſſe,
But litel fro his declination
Of Cancer, Joves exaltation.
And ſo befell in that bright morwe tide,
That in the gardin, on the ferther ſide,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compagnie
Folwing his wif, the quene Proſerpina,
Which that he ravisſhed out of Ethna,
While that ſhe gadred floures in the mede,
(In Claudian ye may the ſtory rede,
How that hire in his griſely carte he fette)
This king of Faerie adoun him ſette
Upon a benche of turves freſhe and grene,
And right anon thus ſaid he to his quene.
My wif, quod he, ther may no wight ſay nay,
The experience ſo preveth it every day,
The treſon which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thouſand ſtories tell I can
Notable of your untrouth and brotelneſſe.
O Salomon, richeſt of all richeſſe,

Fulfilled of ſapience, and worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and reſon can.
Thus praiſeth he the bountee yet of man;
Among a thouſand men yet fond I on,
But of all women fond I never non.
Thus ſaith this king, that knewe your wikkedneſſe;
And Jeſus, *Filius* Sirach, as I geſſe,
He ſpeketh of you but ſelden reverence.
A wilde fire, a corrupt peſtilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne ſee ye not this honourable knight?
Becauſe, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man ſhal make him cokewold.
Lo, wher he ſit, the lechour, in the tree.
Now wol I graunten of my majeſtee
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he ſhal have again his eyen ſight,
Whan that his wif wol don him vilanie;
Than ſhal he knowen all hire harlotrie,
Both in reprefe of hire and other mo.

Ye, ſire, quod Proſerpine, and wol ye ſo?
Now by my modre Ceres ſoule I ſwere,
That I ſhal yeve hire ſuffiſant anſwere,
And alle women after for hire ſake;
That though they ben in any gilt ytake,

With face bold they ſhul hemſelve excuſe,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuſe.
For lacke of anſwere, non of us ſhul dien.
Al had ye ſeen a thing with bothe youre eyen,
Yet ſhul we ſo viſage it hardely,
And wepe and ſwere and chiden ſubtilly,
That ye ſhul ben as lewed as ben gees.
What rekketh me of your auctoritees?
I wote wel that this Jewe, this Salomon,
Fond of us women fooles many on:
But though that he ne fond no good woman,
Ther hath yfonden many an other man
Women ful good, and trewe, and vertuous;
Witneſſe on hem that dwelte in Criſtes hous,
With martyrdom they preved hir conſtance.
The Romain geſtes maken remembrance
Of many a veray trewe wif alſo.
But, ſire, ne be not wroth, al be it ſo,
Though that he ſaid he fond no good woman,
I pray you take the ſentence of the man:
He ment thus, That in ſoverain bountee
N'is non but God, no, nouther he ne ſhe.
Ey, for the veray God that n'is but on,
What maken ye ſo moche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he riche were and glorious?

So made he eke a temple of falſe goddes,
How might he don a thing that more forbode is?
Parde as faire as ye his name emplaſtre,
He was a lechour, and an idolaſtre,
And in his elde he veray God forſoke.
And if that God ne hadde (as ſaith the boke)
Spared him for his fathers ſake, he ſholde
Han loſt his regne rather than he wolde.
I ſete nat of all the vilanie, naught
That he of women wrote, a boterflie.
I am a woman, nedes moſte I ſpeke,
Or ſwell unto that time min herte breke.
For ſin he ſaid that we ben janglereſſes,
As ever mote I brouken hole my treſſes,
I ſhal nat ſparen for no curteſie
To ſpeke him harm, that ſayth us vilanie.
Dame, quod this Pluto, be no lenger wroth,
I yeve it up: but ſin I ſwore min oth,
That I wold graunten him his ſight again,
My word ſhal ſtand, that warne I you certain:
I am a king, it ſit me not to lie. suiteth
And I, quod ſhe, am quene of Faerie.
Hire anſwere ſhe ſhal han I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forſoth, quod he, I wol you not contrary.
Now let us turne again to January,

That in the gardin with his faire May
Singeth wel merier than the popingay:
You love I beſt, and ſhal, and other non.
So long about the alleyes is he gon,
Til he was comen again to thilke pery,
Wher as this Damian ſitteth ful mery
On high, among the freſhe leves grene.
This freſhe May, that is ſo bright and ſhene,
Gan for to ſike, and ſaid; alas my ſide!
Now, ſire, quod ſhe, for ought that may betide
I moſte have of the peres that I ſee,
Or I moſte die, ſo ſore longeth me
To eten of the ſmale peres grene:
Help for hire love that is of heven quene.
I tell you wel a woman in my plit
May have to fruit ſo gret an appetit,
That ſhe may dien, but ſhe of it have.
Alas! quod he, that I n'adde here a knave,
That coude climbe, alas! alas! (quod he)
For I am blinde. Ye, ſire, no force, quod ſhe;
But wold ye vouchefauf for Goddes ſake,
The pery in with your armes for to take,
(For wel I wot that ye miſtruſten me)
Than wold I climben wel ynough, (quod ſhe)
So I my fote might ſetten on your back.
Certes, ſaid he, therin ſhal be no lack,

Might I you helpen with min herte blood.
He ſtoupeth doun, and on his back ſhe ſtood,
And caught hire by a twiſt, and up ſhe goth.
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I can nat gloſe, I am a rude man :)
And ſodenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the ſmock, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto ſaw this grete wrong,
To January he yaf again his ſight,
And made him ſee as wel as ever he might.
And whan he thus had caught his ſight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing ſo fain :
But on his wif his thought was ever mo.
Up to the tree he caſt his eyen two,
And ſaw how Damian his wife had dreſſed
In ſwiche manere, it may not ben expreſſed,
But if I wolde ſpeke uncurteiſly.
And up he yaf a roring and a cry,
As doth the mother whan the child ſhal die ;
Out ! helpe ! alas ! harow ! he gan to cry ;
O ſtronge lady ſtore, what doeſt thou ?
And ſhe anſwered : ſire, what aileth you ?
Have patience and reſon in your minde,
I have you holpen on both your eyen blinde.
Up peril of my ſoule, I ſhal nat lien,
As me was taught to helpen with your eyen,

Was nothing better for to make you ſee,
Than ſtrogle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in ful good entent.
Strogle! quod he, ye, algate in it went.
God yeve you both on ſhames deth to dien!
He ſwived thee; I ſaw it with min eyen;
And elles be I honged by the halſe.
Than is, quod ſhe, my medicine al falſe.
For certainly, if that ye mighten ſee,
Ye wold not ſay thiſe wordes unto me.
Ye have ſom glimſing, and no parfit ſight.
I ſee, quod he, as wel as ever I might,
(Thanked be God) with both min eyen two,
And by my feith me thought he did thee ſo.
Ye maſe, ye maſen, goode ſire, quod ſhe;
This thank have I for I have made you ſee:
Alas! quod ſhe, that ever I was ſo kind.
Now, dame, quod he, let al paſſe out of mind:
Come doun, my leſe, and if I have miſſaid,
God helpe me ſo, as I am evil apaid.
But by my fadres ſoule, I wende have ſein,
How that this Damian had by thee lein,
And that thy ſmock had lein upon his breſt.
Ye, ſire, quod ſhe, ye may wene as you leſt:
But, ſire, a man that waketh of his ſlepe,
He may not ſodenly wel taken kepe

Upon a thing, ne ſeen it parfitly,
Til that he be adawed veraily.
Right ſo a man, that long hath blind ybe,
He may not ſodenly ſo wel yſee,
Firſt whan his ſight is newe comen agein,
As he that hath a day or two yſein.
Til that your ſight yſateled be a while,
Ther may ful many a fighte you begile.
Beware, I pray you, for by heven king
Ful many a man weneth to ſee a thing,
And it is all another than it ſemeth:
He which that miſconceiveth oft miſdemeth.
And with that word ſhe lep doun fro the tree.
This January who is glad but he?
He kiſſeth hire, and clippeth hire ful oft,
And on hire wombe he ſtroketh hire ful ſoft;
And to his paleis home he hath hire lad.
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie,
God bleſſe us, and his moder Seinte Marie.

THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

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By Goddes mercy, ſayde oure Hoſte tho,
Now ſwiche a wif I preie God kepe me fro.
Lo, ſwiche ſleightes and ſubtilitees
In women ben; for ay as beſy as bees
Ben they us ſely men for to deceive,
And from a ſothe wol they ever weive.
By this Marchantes tale it preveth wel.
But natheles, as trewe as any ſtele,
I have a wif, though that ſhe poure be;
But of hire tonge a labbing ſhrewe is ſhe;
And yet ſhe hath an hepe of vices mo.
Therof no force; let all ſwiche thinges go.
But wete ye what? in conſeil be it ſeyde,
Me reweth ſore I am unto hire teyde;
For and I ſhulde rekene every vice,
Which that ſhe hath, ywis I were to nice;
And cauſe why, it ſhulde reported be
And told to hire of ſom of this compagnie,
(Of whom it nedeth not for to declare,
Sin women connen utter ſwiche chaffare)

And eke my wit ſufficeth not therto
To tellen all; wherfore my tale is do.
Squier, come ner, if it youre wille be,
And ſay ſomwhat of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as any man.
Nay, ſire, quod he, but ſwiche thing as I can
With hertly wille, for I wol not rebelle
Agein youre luſt, a tale wol I telle.
Have me excuſed if I ſpeke amis;
My wille is good; and lo, my tale is this.

THE SQUIERES TALE.

At Sarra, in the lond of Tartarie,
Ther dwelt a king that werreied Ruſſie,
Thurgh which ther died many a doughty man:
This noble king was cleped Cambuſcan,
Which in his time was of ſo gret renoun,
That ther n'as no wher in no regioun,
So excellent a lord in alle thing:
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
As of the ſecte of which that he was borne.
He kept his lay to which he was yſworne,

And therto he was hardy, wiſe, and riche,
And pitous and juſt, and alway yliche;
Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable;
Of his corage as any centre ſtable;
Yong, freſh, and ſtrong, in armes deſirous,
As any bacheler of all his hous.
A faire perſon he was, and fortunate,
And kept alway ſo wel real eſtat,
That ther n'as no wher ſwiche another man.
This noble king, this Tartre Cambuſcan,
Hadde two ſones by Elfeta his wif,
Of which the eldeſt ſone highte Algarſif,
That other was ycleped Camballo.
A doughter had this worthy king alſo,
That yongeſt was, and highte Canace:
But for to tellen you all hire beautee,
It lith not in my tonge, ne in my conning,
I dare not undertake ſo high a thing:
Min Engliſh eke is unfufficient,
It muſte ben a Rethor excellent,
That coude his colours longing for that art,
If he ſhuld hire deſcriven ony part:
I am not ſwiche, I mote ſpeke as I can.
And ſo befell, that whan this Cambuſcan
Hath twenty winter borne his diademe,
As he was wont fro yere to yere I deme,

He let the feſte of his nativitee
Don crien, thurghout Sarra his citee,
The laſt Idus of March, after the yere.
Phebus the ſonne ful jolif was and clere,
For he was nigh his exaltation
In Martes face, and in his manſion
In Aries, the colerike hote ſigne:
Ful luſty was the wether and benigne,
For which the foules again the ſonne ſhene,
What for the ſeſon and the yonge grene,
Ful loude ſongen hir affections:
Hem ſemed han getten hem protections
Again the ſwerd of winter kene and cold.
This Cambuſcan, of which I have you told,
In real veſtiments, ſit on his deis
With diademe, ful high in his paleis;
And holt his feſte ſo ſolempne and ſo riche,
That in this world ne was ther non it liche.
Of which if I ſhal tellen all the array,
Than wold it occupie a ſomers day;
And eke it nedeth not for to deviſe
At every cours the order of hir ſervice.
I wol not tellen of hir ſtrange ſewes,
Ne of hir ſwannes, ne hir heronſewes.
Eke in that lond, as tellen knightes old,
Ther is ſom mete that is ful deintee hold,

That in this lond men recche of it ful ſmal:
Ther n'is no man that may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but loſſe of time,
Unto my purpoſe I wol have recours.

And ſo befell that after the thridde cours
While that this king ſit thus in his nobley,
Herking his miniſtralles hir thinges pley
Beforne him at his bord deliciouſly,
In at the halle dore al ſodenly
Ther came a knight upon a ſtede of bras,
And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his ſide a naked ſwerd hanging:
And up he rideth to the highe bord.
In all the halle ne was ther ſpoke a word,
For mervaille of this knight; him to behold
Ful beſily they waiten yong and old.

This ſtrange knight that come thus ſodenly
Al armed ſave his hed ful richely,
Salueth king and quene, and lordes alle
By order, as they ſaten in the halle,
With ſo high reverence and obſervance,
As wel in ſpeche as in his contenance,
That Gawain with his olde curteſie,
Though he were come agen out of faerie,

Ne coude him not amenden with a word.
And after this, beforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois ſayd his meſſage,
After the forme uſed in his langage,
Withouten vice of ſillable or of letter.
And for his tale ſhulde ſeme the better,
Accordant to his wordes was his chere,
As techeth art of ſpeche hem that it lere.
Al be it that I cannot ſoune his ſtile,
Ne cannot climben over ſo high a ſtile,
Yet ſay I this, as to comun entent,
Thus much amounteth all that ever he ment,
If it ſo be that I have it in mind.

He ſayd; The king of Arabie and of Inde,
My liege lord, on this ſolempne day
Saludeth you as he beſt can and may,
And ſendeth you in honour of your feſte
By me, that am al redy at your heſte,
This ſtede of bras, that eſily and wel
Can in the ſpace of a day naturel,
(This is to ſayn, in four and twenty houres)
Wher ſo you lift, in drought or elles ſhoures,
Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte willeth for to pace,
Withouten wemme of you, thurgh foule or faire.
Or if you lift to fleen as high in the aire,

As doth an egle, whan him liſt to ſore,
This ſame ſtede ſhal bere you evermore
Withouten harme, till ye be ther you leſt,
(Though that ye ſlepen on his back or reſt)
And turne again, with writhing of a pin.
He that it wrought, he coude many a gin;
He waited many a conſtellation,
Or he had don this operation,
And knew ful many a ſele and many a bond.

This mirrour eke, that I have in min hond,
Hath ſwiche a might, that men may in it ſee,
Whan ther ſhal falle ony adverſitee
Unto your regne, or to yourſelf alſo,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath ſet hire herte on any maner wight,
If he be falſe, ſhe ſhal his treſon ſee,
His newe love, and all his ſubtiltee
So openly, that ther ſhal nothing hide.

Wherfore again this luſty ſomer tide
This mirrour and this ring, that ye may ſe,
He hath ſent to my lady Canace,
Your excellente doughter that is here.

The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here,
Is this, that if hire liſt it for to were
Upon hire thombe, or in hire purſe it bere,

Ther is no foule that fleeth under heven,
That ſhe ne ſhal wel underſtond his ſteven,
And know his mening openly and plaine,
And anſwere him in his langage again:
And every gras that groweth upon rote
She ſhal eke know, and whom it wol do bote,
All be his woundes never ſo depe and wide.

This naked ſwerd, that hangeth by my ſide,
Swiche vertue hath, that what man that it ſmite,
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and bite,
Were it as thicke as is a braunched oke:
And what man that is wounded with the ſtroke
Shal never be hole, til that you liſt of grace
To ſtroken him with the platte in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as much to ſain,
Ye moten with the platte ſwerd again
Stroken him in the wound, and it wol cloſe.
This is the veray ſoth withouten gloſe,
It failleth not, while it is in your hold.

And whan this knight hath thus his tale told,
He rideth out of halle, and doun he light:
His ſtede, which that ſhone as ſonne bright,
Stant in the court as ſtille as any ſton.
This knight is to his chambre ladde anon,
And is unarmed, and to the mete yſette.
Thiſe preſents ben ful richelich yfette,

This is to ſain, the ſwerd and the mirrour,
And borne anon into the highe tour,
With certain officers ordained therfore;
And unto Canace the ring is bore
Solempnely, ther ſhe ſat at the table;
But ſikerly, withouten any fable,
The hors of bras, that may not be remued;
It ſtant, as it were to the ground yglued;
Ther may no man out of the place it drive
For non engine, of windas, or polive:
And cauſe why, for they con not the craft,
And therfore in the place they han it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere
To voiden him, as ye ſhal after here.

Gret was the prees, that ſwarmed to and fro
To gauren on this hors that ſtondeth ſo:
For it ſo high was, and ſo brod and long,
So wel proportioned for to be ſtrong,
Right as it were a ſtede of Lumbardie;
Therwith ſo horſly, and ſo quik of eye,
As it a gentil Poileis courſer were:
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere
Nature ne art ne coud him not amend
In no degree, as all the peple wend.

But evermore hir moſte wonder was,
How that it coude gon, and was of bras;

It was of faerie, as the peple ſemed.
Diverſe folk diverſely han demed;
As many heds, as many wittes ben.
They murmured, as doth a ſwarme of been,
And maden ſkilles after hir fantaſies,
Reherſing of the olde poetries,
And ſayd it was ylike the Pegaſee,
The hors that hadde winges for to flee,
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Sinon,
That broughte Troye to deſtruction,
As men moun in thiſe olde geſtes rede.
Min herte (quod on) is evermore in drede,
I trow ſom men of armes ben therin,
That ſhapen hem this citee for to win:
It were right good that al ſwiche thing were know.
Another rowned to his felaw low,
And ſayd, He lieth, for it is rather like
An apparence ymade by ſom magike,
As jogelours plaien at thiſe feſtes grete.
Of ſondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demen comunly
Of thinges, that ben made more ſubtilly,
Than they can in hir lewedneſſe comprehende,
They demen gladly to the badder ende.
And ſom of hem wondred on the mirrour,
That born was up in to the maiſter tour,

How men mighte in it ſwiche thinges ſee.
Another anſwerd, and ſayd, it might wel be
Naturelly by compoſitions
Of angles, and of ſlie reflections;
And ſaide that in Rome was ſwiche on.
They ſpeke of Alhazen and Vitellon,
And Ariſtotle, that writen in hir lives
Of queinte mirrours, and of proſpectives,
As knowen they, that han hir bookes herd.
And other folk han wondred on the ſwerd,
That wolde percen thurghout every thing:
And fell in ſpeche of Telephus the king,
And of Achilles for his queinte ſpere,
For he coude with it bothe hele and dere,
Right in ſwiche wiſe as men may with the ſwerd,
Of which right now ye have yourſelven herd.
They ſpeken of ſondry harding of metall,
And ſpeken of medicines therwithall,
And how, and whan it ſhuld yharded be,
Which is unknow algates unto me.
Tho ſpeken they of Canacees ring,
And ſaiden all, that ſwiche a wonder thing
Of craft of ringes herd they never non,
Save that he Moiſes and king Salomon
Hadden a name of conning in ſwiche art.
Thus ſain the peple, and drawen hem apart.

But natheles ſom ſaiden that it was
Wonder to maken of ferne aſhen glas,
And yet is glas nought like aſhen of ferne,
But for they han yknowen it ſo ferne,
Therfore ceſeth hir jangling and hir wonder.
As ſore wondren ſom on cauſe of thonder,
On ebbe and floud, on goſſomer, and on miſt,
And on all thing, til that the cauſe is wiſt.
Thus janglen they, and demen and deviſe,
Til that the king gan fro his bord ariſe.
Phebus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet aſcending was the beſte real,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldrian,
Whan that this Tartre king, this Cambuſcan,
Roſe from his bord, ther as he ſat ful hie:
Beforne him goth the loude minſtralcie,
Til he come to his chambre of parements,
Ther as they ſounden divers inſtruments,
That it is like an heven for to here.
Now dauncen luſty Venus children dere:
For in the fiſh hir lady ſet ful hie,
And loketh on hem with a frendly eye.
This noble king is ſet upon his trone;
This ſtraunge knight is ſet to him ful ſone,
And on the daunce he goth with Canace.
Here is the revell and the jolitee,

That is not able a dull man to deviſe:
He muſt han knowen love and his ſerviſe,
And ben a feſtlich man, as freſh as May,
That ſhulde you deviſen ſwiche array.
Who coude tellen you the forme of daunces
So uncouth, and ſo freſhe contenaunces,
Swiche ſubtil lokings and diſſimulings,
For dred of jalous mennes apperceivings?
No man but Launcelot, and he is ded.
Therfore I paſſe over all this luſtyhed,
I ſay no more, but in this jolineſſe
I lete hem, til men to the ſouper hem dreſſe.
The ſteward bit the ſpices for to hie
And eke the win, in all this melodie;
The uſhers and the ſquierie ben gon,
The ſpices and the win is come anon:
They ete and drinke, and whan this had an end,
Unto the temple, as reſon was, they wend:
The ſervice don, they ſoupen all by day.
What nedeth you reherſen hir array?
Eche man wot wel, that at a kinges feſt
Is plentee, to the moſt and to the leſt,
And deintees mo than ben in my knowing.
At after ſouper goth this noble king
To ſeen this hors of bras, with all a route
Of lordes and of ladies him aboute.

Swiche wondring was ther on this hors of bras,
That ſin the gret aſſege of Troye was,
Ther as men wondred on an hors alſo,
Ne was ther ſwiche a wondring, as was tho.
But finally the king aſketh the knight
The vertue of this courſer, and the might,
And praied him to tell his governaunce.

This hors anon gan for to trip and daunce,
Whan that the knight laid hond up on his rein,
And ſaide, ſire, ther n'is no more to ſain,
But whan you liſt to riden any where,
Ye moten trill a pin, ſtant in his ere,
Which I ſhal tellen you betwixt us two,
Ye moten nempne him to what place alſo,
Or to what contree that you liſt to ride.

And whan ye come ther as you liſt abide,
Bid him deſcend, and trill another pin,
(For therin lieth the effect of all the gin)
And he wol doun deſcend and don your will,
And in that place he wol abiden ſtill:
Though al the world had the contrary ſwore,
He ſhal not thennes be drawe ne be bore.
Or if you liſt to bid him thennes gon,
Trille this pin, and he wol vaniſh anon
Out of the ſight of every maner wight,
And come agen, be it by day or night,

Whan that you lift to clepen him again
In fwiche a guife, as I fhal to you fain
Betwixen you and me, and that ful fone.
Ride whan you lift, ther n'is no more to done.

Enfourmed whan the king was of the knight,
And hath conceived in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of all this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel, as beforne.
The bridel is in to the tour yborne,
And kept among his jewels lefe and dere:
The hors vanifht, I n'ot in what manere,
Out of hir fight, ye get no more of me:
But thus I lete in luft and jolitee
This Cambufcan his lordes feafteying,
Til that wel nigh the day began to fpring.

PARS SECUNDA.

The norice of digeftion, the flepe,
Gan on hem winke, and bad hem taken kepe,
That mochel drinke, and labour wol have reft;
And with a galping mouth hem all he keft,
And faid, that it was time to lie adoun,
For blood was in his dominatioun:

Cheriſheth blood, natures frend, quod he.
They thanken him galping, by two by three;
And every wight gan drawe him to his reſt,
As ſlepe hem bade, they toke it for the beſt.
Hir dremes ſhul not now be told for me;
Ful were hir hedes of fumoſitee,
That cauſeth dreme, of which ther is no charge.
They ſlepen til that it was prime large,
The moſte part, but it were Canace;
She was ful meſurable, as women be.
For of hire father had ſhe take hire leve
To gon to reſt, ſone after it was eve;
Hire liſte not appalled for to be,
Nor on the morwe unfeſtliche for to ſee;
And ſlept hire firſte ſlepe, and than awoke.
For ſwiche a joye ſhe in hire herte toke
Both of hire queinte ring, and of hire mirrour,
That twenty time ſhe chaunged hire colour;
And in hire ſlepe right for the impreſſion
Of hire mirrour ſhe had a viſion.
Wherfore, or that the ſonne gan up glide,
She clepeth upon hire maiſtreſſe hire beſide,
And ſaide, that hire luſte for to ariſe.
Thiſe olde women, that ben gladly wiſe,
As is hire maiſtreſſe, anſwerd hire anon,
And ſaid; Madame, whider wol ye gon

Thus erly? for the folk ben all in reſt.
I wol, quod ſhe, ariſen (for me leſt
No longer for to ſlepe) and walken aboute.
Hire maiſtreſſe clepeth women a gret route,
And up they riſen, wel a ten or twelve;
Up riſeth freſhe Canace hireſelve,
As rody and bright, as the yonge ſonne,
That in the ram is foure degrees yronne;
No higher was he, whan ſhe redy was;
And forth ſhe walketh eſily a pas,
Arrayed after the luſty ſeſon ſote
Lightely for to playe, and walken on fote,
Nought but with five or ſixe of hire meinie;
And in a trenche forth in the park goth ſhe.
The vapour, which that fro the erthe glode,
Maketh the ſonne to ſeme rody and brode:
But natheles, it was ſo faire a ſight,
That it made all hir hertes for to light,
What for the ſeſon, and the morwening,
And for the foules that ſhe herde ſing.
For right anon ſhe wiſte what they ment
Right by hir ſong, and knew al hir entent.
The knotte, why that every tale is tolde,
If it be taried til the luſt be colde
Of hem, that han it herkened after yore,
The ſavour paſſeth ever lenger the more,

For fulſumneſſe of the prolixitee:
And by that ſame reſon thinketh mé
I ſhuld unto the knotte condeſcende,
And maken of hire walking ſone an endė.
Amidde a tree for-dry, as white as chalk,
As Canace was playing in hire walk,
Ther ſat a faucon over hire hed ful hie,
That with a pitous vois ſo gan to crie,
That all the wood reſouned of hire cry,
And beten had hireſelf ſo pitouſly
With bothe hire winges, til the rede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as ſhe ſtood.
And ever in on alway ſhe cried and ſhright,
And with hire bek hireſelven ſhe ſo twight,
That ther n'is tigre, ne no cruel beſt,
That dwelleth other in wood, or in foreſt,
That n'olde han wept, if that he wepen coude,
For ſorwe of hire, ſhe ſhright alway ſo loude.
For ther was never yet no man on live,
If that he coude a faucon wel deſcrive,
That herde of ſwiche another of fayreneſſe
As wel of plumage, as of gentileſſe,
Of ſhape, of all that might yrekenęd be.
A faucon peregrine ſemed ſhe
Of fremde lond, and ever as ſhe ſtood,
She ſwouned now and now for lack of blood,

Til wel neigh is ſhe fallen fro the tree.
This faire kinges doughter Canace,
That on hire finger bare the queinte ring,
Thurgh which ſhe underſtood wel every thing
That any foule may in his leden ſain,
And coude anſwere him in his leden again,
Hath underſtonden what this faucon ſeyd,
And wel neigh for the routhe almoſt ſhe deyd:
And to the tree ſhe goth ful haſtily,
And on this faucon loketh pitouſly,
And held hire lap abrode, for wel ſhe wiſt
The faucon muſte fallen from the twiſt
Whan that ſhe ſwouned next, for faute of blood.
A longe while to waiten hire ſhe ſtood,
Til at the laſt ſhe ſpake in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye ſhul after here.
What is the cauſe, if it be for to tell,
That ye ben in this furial peine of hell?
Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
Is this for ſorwe of deth, or loſſe of love?
For as I trow, thiſe be the cauſes two,
That cauſen moſt a gentil herte wo.
Of other harme it nedeth not to ſpeke,
For ye yourſelf upon yourſelf awreke,
Which preveth wel, that other ire or drede
Mote ben encheſon of your cruel dede,

Sin that I ſe non other wight you chace.
For the love of God, as doth yourſelven grace:
Or what may be your helpe? for weſt ne eſt
Ne ſaw I never er now no brid ne beſt,
That ferde with himſelf ſo pitouſly.
Ye ſle me with your ſorwe veraily,
I have of you ſo gret compaſſioun.
For Goddes love come fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kinges doughter trewe,
If that I veraily the cauſes knewe
Of your diſeſe, if it lay in my might,
I wold amend it, or that it were night,
As wiſly help me the gret God of kind.
And herbes ſhal I right ynough yfind,
To helen with your hurtes haſtily.
Tho ſhright this faucon yet more pitouſly
Than ever ſhe did, and fell to ground anon,
And lith aſwoune, as ded as lith a ſton,
Til Canace hath in hire lappe hire take,
Unto that time ſhe gan of ſwoune awake:
And after that ſhe out of ſwoune abraide,
Right in hire haukes leden thus ſhe ſayde.
That pitee renneth ſone in gentil herte
(Feling his ſimilitude in peines ſmerte)
Is proved alle day, as men may ſee,
As wel by werke as by auctoritee,

For gentil herte kitheth gentilleſſe.
I ſee wel, that ye have on my diſtreſſe
Compaſſion, my faire Canace,
Of veray womanly benignitee,
That nature in your principles hath ſet.
But for non hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obey unto your herte free,
And for to maken other yware by me,
As by the whelpe chaſtiſed is the leon,
Right for that cauſe and that concluſion,
While that I have a leiſer and a ſpace,
Min harme I wol confeſſen er I pace.
And ever while that on hire ſorwe told,
That other wept, as ſhe to water wold,
Til that the faucon bad hire to be ſtill,
And with a ſike right thus ſhe ſaid hire till.

Ther I was bred, (alas that ilke day!)
And foſtred in a roche of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing ailed me.
I ne wiſt not what was adverſitee,
Til I coud flee ful high under the ſkie.

Tho dwelled a tercelet me faſte by,
That ſemed welle of alle gentilleſſe,
Al were he ful of treſon and falſeneſſe.
It was ſo wrapped under humble chere,
And under hew of trouth in ſwiche manere,

Under pleſance, and under beſy peine,
That no wight coud have wend he coude feine,
So depe in greyn he died his coloures.
Right as a ſerpent hideth him under floures,
Til he may ſee his time for to bite;
Right ſo this god of loves hypocrite
Doth ſo his ceremonies and obeiſance,
And kepeth in ſemblaunt alle his obſervance,
That ſouneth unto gentilleſſe of love.
As on a tombe is all the faire above,
And under is the corps, ſwiche as ye wote;
Swiche was this hypocrite both cold and hote,
And in this wiſe he ſerved his entent,
That, ſave the fend, non wiſte what he ment:
Til he ſo long had weped and complained,
And many a yere his ſervice to me fained,
Till that min herte, to pitous and to nice,
Al innocent of his crowned malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his ſeuretee,
Graunted him love, on this conditioun,
That evermo min honour and renoun
Were ſaved, bothe privee and apert;
This is to ſay, that, after his deſert,
I yave him all min herte and all my thought,
(God wote, and he, that other wayes nought)

And toke his herte in chaunge of min for ay.
But ſoth is ſaid, gon ſithen is many a day,
A trewe wight and a theef thinken not on.
And whan he ſaw the thing ſo fer ygon,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In ſwiche a guiſe as I have ſaid above,
And yeven him my trewe herte as free
As he ſwore that he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doubleneſſe,
Fell on his knees with ſo gret humbleſſe,
With ſo high reverence, as by his chere,
So like a gentil lover of manere,
So raviſhed, as it ſemed, for the joye,
That never Jaſon, ne Paris of Troye,
Jaſon? certes, ne never other man,
Sin Lamech was, that alderfirſt began
To loven two, as writen folk beforne,
Ne never ſithen the firſt man was borne,
Ne coude man by twenty thouſand part
Contrefete the ſophimes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbocle his galoche,
Ther doubleneſſe of faining ſhuld approche,
Ne coude ſo thanke a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to ſee
To any woman, were ſhe never ſo wiſe;
So painted he and kempt, at point deviſe,

As wel his wordes, as his contenance.
And I ſo loved him for his obeiſance,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if ſo were that any thing him ſmerte,
Al were it never ſo lite, and I it wiſt,
Me thought I felt deth at myn herte twiſt.
And ſhortly, ſo ferforth this thing is went,
That my will was his willes inſtrument;
This is to ſay, my will obeied his will
In alle thing, as fer as reſon fill,
Keping the boundes of my worſhip ever:
Ne never had I thing ſo lefe, ne lever,
As him, God wot, ne never ſhal no mo.
This laſteth lenger than a yere or two,
That I ſuppoſed of him nought but good.
But finally, thus at the laſt it ſtood,
That fortune wolde that he muſte twin
Out of that place, which that I was in.
Wher me was wo, it is no queſtion;
I cannot make of it deſcription.
For o thing dare I tellen boldely,
I know what is the peine of deth therby,
Swiche harme I felt, for he ne might byleve.
So on a day of me he toke his leve,
So forweful eke, that I wend veraily,
That he had felt as mochel harme as I,

Whan that I herd him ſpeke, and ſaw his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was ſo trewe,
And eke that he repairen ſhuld again
Within a litel while, ſoth to ſain,
And reſon wold eke that he muſte go
For his honour, as often happeth ſo,
That I made vertue of neceſſitee,
And toke it wel, ſin that it muſte be.
As I beſt might, I hid fro him my ſorwe,
And toke him by the hond, Seint John to borwe,
And ſaid him thus; lo, I am youres all,
Beth ſwiche as I have ben to you and ſhall.
What he anſwerd, it nedeth not reherſe;
Who can ſay bet than he, who can do werſe?
Whan he hath al wel ſaid, than hath he done.
Therfore behoveth him a ful long ſpone,
That ſhal ete with a fend; thus herd I ſay.
So at the laſt he muſte forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he come ther him left.
Whan it came him to purpos for to reſt,
I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
That alle thing repairing to his kind
Gladeth himſelf; thus ſain men as I geſſe:
Men loven of propre kind newefangelneſſe,
As briddes don, that men in cages fede.
For though thou night and day take of hem hede,

And ſtrew hir cage faire and ſoft as ſilke,
And give hem ſugre, hony, bred, and milke,
Yet right anon as that his dore is up,
He with his feet wol ſpurnen doun his cup,
And to the wood he wol, and wormes ete;
So newefangel ben they of hir mete,
And loven noveltees of propre kind;
No gentilleſſe of blood ne may hem bind.

So ferd this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentil borne, and freſh, and gay,
And goodly for to ſeen, and humble, and free,
He ſaw upon a time a kite flee,
And ſodenly he loved this kite ſo,
That all his love is clene fro me ago:
And hath his trouthe falſed in this wife.
Thus hath the kite my love in hire ſervice,
And I am lorn withouten remedy.

And with that word this faucon gan to cry,
And ſwouneth eft in Canacees barme.
Gret was the ſorwe for that haukes harme,
That Canace and all hire women made;
They n'iſten how they might the faucon glade.
But Canace hom bereth hire in hire lap,
And ſoftely in plaſtres gan hire wrap,
Ther as ſhe with hire bek had hurt hireſelve.

Now cannot Canace but herbes delve

Out of the ground, and maken ſalves newe
Of herbes precious and fine of hewe,
To helen with this hauk; fro day to night
She doth hire beſineſſe, and all hire might.
And by hire beddes hed ſhe made a mew,
And covered it with velouettes blew,
In ſigne of trouth, that is in woman ſene;
And all without the mew is peinted grene,
In which were peinted all thiſe falſe foules,
As ben thiſe tidifes, tercelettes, and owles;
And pies, on hem for to cry and chide,
Right for deſpit were peinted hem beſide.
Thus lete I Canace hire hauk keping.
I wol no more as now ſpeke of hire ring,
Til it come eft to purpos for to ſain,
How that this faucon gat hire love again
Repentant, as the ſtory telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus
The kinges ſone, of which that I you told.
But hennesforth I wol my proceſſe hold
To ſpeke of aventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never herd ſo gret mervailles.
Firſt wol I tellen you of Cambuſcan,
That in his time many a citee wan:
And after wol I ſpeke of Algarſif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,

For whom ful oft in gret peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wol I ſpeke of Camballo,
That fought in liſtes with the brethren two
For Canace, er that he might hire winne,
And ther I left I wol again beginne.

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THE FRANKELEINES PROLOGUE.

v. 10985—11004

In faith, Squier, thou haſt thee wel yquit
And gentilly, I preiſe wel thy wit,
Quod the Frankelein; conſidering thin youthe,
So felingly thou ſpekeſt, ſire, I aloue the
As to my dome, ther is non that is here,
Of eloquence that ſhal be thy pere,
If that thou live; God yeve thee goode chance,
And in vertue ſend thee continuance,
For of thy ſpeking I have gret deintee.
I have a ſone, and by the Trinitee
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
He were a man of ſwiche diſcretion,
As that ye ben: fie on poſſeſſion,
But if a man be vertuous withal.
I have my ſone ſnibbed, and yet ſhal,
For he to vertue liſteth not to entend,
But for to play at dis, and to diſpend,
And leſe all that he hath, is his uſage;
And he had lever talken with a page,

Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Ther he might leren gentilleſſe aright.
Straw for your gentilleſſe, quod our hoſte.
What? Frankelein, parde, ſire, wel thou woſt,
That eche of you mote tellen at the leſt
A tale or two, or breken his beheſt.
That know I wel, ſire, quod the Frankelein,
I pray you haveth me not in diſdein,
Though I to this man ſpeke a word or two.
Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.
Gladly, ſire hoſte, quod he, I wol obey
Unto your will; now herkeneth what I ſey;
I wol you not contrarien in no wiſe,
As fer as that my wittes may ſuffice.
I pray to God that it may pleſen you,
Than wot I wel that it is good ynow.

Thiſe olde gentil Bretons in hir dayes
Of diverſe aventures maden layes,
Rimeyed in hir firſte Breton tonge;
Which layes with hir inſtruments they ſonge,
Or elles redden hem for hir pleſance,
And on of hem have I in remembrance,
Which I ſhal ſayn with good wille as I can.
But, ſires, becauſe I am a borel man,
At my beginning firſt I you beſeche

Have me excuſed of my rude ſpeche.
I lerned never rhetorike certain;
Thing that I ſpeke, it mote be bare and plain.
I ſlept never on the mount of Pernaſo,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
But ſwiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles ſwiche as men die with or peinte;
Colours of rhetorike ben to me queinte;
My ſpirit feleth not of ſwiche matere.
But if you luſt my tale ſhul ye here.

THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

In Armorike, that called is Bretaigne,
Ther was a knight, that loved and did his peine
To ſerve a ladie in his beſte wiſe;
And many a labour, many a gret empriſe
He for his lady wrought, or ſhe were wonne:
For ſhe was on the faireſt under ſonne,
And eke therto comen of ſo high kinrede,
That wel unnethes durſt this knight for drede
Tell hire his wo, his peine, and his diſtreſſe.
But at the laſt, ſhe for his worthineſſe,

And namely for his meke obeyſance,
Hath ſwiche a pitee caught of his penance,
That prively ſhe fell of his accord
To take him for hire huſbond and hire lord;
(Of ſwiche lordſhip as men han over hir wives)
And, for to lede the more in bliſſe hir lives,
Of his free will he ſwore hire as a knight,
That never in all his lif he day ne night
Ne ſhulde take upon him no maiſtrie
Agains hire will, ne kithe hire jalouſie,
But hire obey, and folwe hire will in al,
As any lover to his lady ſhal:
Save that the name of ſoverainetee
That wold he han for ſhame of his degree.
She thonked him, and with ful gret humbleſſe
She ſaide; ſire, ſin of your gentilleſſe
Ye profren me to have ſo large a reine,
Ne wolde God never betwix us tweine,
As in my gilt, were either werre or ſtrif:
Sire, I wol be your humble trewe wif,
Have here my trouth, till that myn herte breſte.
Thus ben they both in quiete and in reſte.

For o thing, ſires, ſaufly dare I ſeie,
That frendes everich other muſt obeie,
If they wol longe holden compagnie.
Love wol not be conſtreined by maiſtrie.

Whan maiſtrie cometh, the God of love anon
Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon.
Love is a thing, as any ſpirit, free.
Women of kind deſiren libertee,
And not to be conſtreined as a thral;
And ſo don men, if ſothly I ſay ſhal.
Loke who that is moſt patient in love,
He is at his avantage all above.
Patience is an high vertue certain,
For it venquiſheth, as thiſe clerkes ſain,
Thinges that rigour never ſhulde atteine.
For every word men may not chide or pleine.
Lerneth to ſuffren, or, ſo mote I gon,
Ye ſhul it lerne whether ye wol or non.
For in this world certain no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or ſayth ſomtime amis.
Ire, ſikeneſſe, or conſtellation,
Win, wo, or changing of complexion,
Cauſeth ful oft to don amis or ſpeken:
On every wrong a man may not be wreken.
After the time muſt be temperance
To every wight that can of governance.
And therfore hath this worthy wiſe knight
(To liven in eſe) ſuffrance hire behight;
And ſhe to him ful wiſly gan to ſwere,
That never ſhuld ther be defaute in here.

Here may men ſeen an humble wife accord:
Thus hath ſhe take hire ſervant and hire lord,
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.
Than was he both in lordſhip and ſervage?
Servage? nay, but in lordſhip al above,
Sin he hath both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wif alſo,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this proſperitee,
Home with his wif he goth to his contree,
Not fer fro Penmark, ther his dwelling was,
Wher as he liveth in bliſſe and in ſolas.

Who coude tell, but he had wedded be,
The joye, the eſe, and the proſperitee,
That is betwix an huſbond and his wif?
A yere and more laſteth this blisful lif,
Til that this knight, of which I ſpake of thus,
That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus,
Shope him to gon and dwelle a yere or twaine
In Englelond, that cleped was eke Bretaigne,
To ſeke in armes worſhip and honour:
(For all his luſt he ſet in ſwiche labour)
And dwelte ther two yere; the book ſaith thus.

Now wol I ſtint of this Arviragus,
And ſpeke I wol of Dorigene his wif,
That loveth hire huſbond as hire hertes lif.

For his abſence wepeth ſhe and ſiketh,
As don thiſe noble wives whan hem liketh;
She morneth, waketh, waileth, faſteth, pleineth;
Deſir of his preſence hire ſo diſtraineth,
That all this wide world ſhe ſet at nought.
Hire frendes, which that knew hire hevy thought,
Comforten hire in all that ever they may;
They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day,
That cauſeles ſhe ſleth hirefelf, alas!
And every comfort poſſible in this cas
They don to hire, with all hir beſineſſe,
Al for to make hire leve hire hevineſſe.
By proceſſe, as ye knowen everich on,
Men mowe ſo longe graven in a ſton,
Til ſom figure therin emprented be:
So long han they comforted hire, til ſhe
Received hath, by hope and by reſon,
The emprenting of hir conſolation,
Thurgh which hire grete ſorwe gan aſſuage;
She may not alway duren in ſwiche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath ſent his lettres home of his welfare,
And that he wol come haſtily again,
Or elles had this ſorwe hire herte ſlain.
Hire frendes ſaw hire ſorwe gan to ſlake,
And preiden hire on knees for Goddes ſake

To come and romen in hir compagnie,
Away to driven hire derke fantaſie:
And finally ſhe granted that requeſt,
For wel ſhe ſaw that it was for the beſt.

Now ſtood hire caſtel faſte by the ſee,
And often with hire frendes walked ſhe,
Hire to diſporten on the bank an hie,
Wher as ſhe many a ſhip and barge ſie,
Sailing hir cours, wher as hem lift to go.
But than was that a parcel of hire wo,
For to hireſelf ful oft, alas! ſaid ſhe,
Is ther no ſhip, of ſo many as I ſee,
Wol bringen home my lord? than were my herte
Al wariſhed of his bitter peines ſmerte.

Another time wold ſhe ſit and thinke,
And caſt her eyen dounward fro the brinke;
But whan ſhe ſaw the griſly rockes blake,
For veray fere ſo wold hire herte quake,
That on hire feet ſhe might hire not ſuſtene.
Than wold ſhe ſit adoun upon the grene,
And pitouſly into the ſee behold,
And ſay right thus, with careful ſikes cold.

Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveance
Ledeſt this world by certain governance,
In idel, as men ſain, ye nothing make.
But, lord, thiſe griſly fendly rockes blake,

That ſemen rather a foule confuſion
Of werk, than any faire creation
Of ſwiche a parfit wiſe God and ſtable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unreſonable?
For by this werk, north, ſouth, ne weſt, ne eſt,
Ther n'is yfoſtred man, ne brid, ne beſt:
It doth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye not, lord, how mankind it deſtroyeth?
An hundred thouſand bodies of mankind
Han rockes ſlain, al be they not in mind;
Which mankind is ſo faire part of thy werk,
Thou madeſt it like to thyn owen merk.
Than, ſemeth it, ye had a gret chertee
Toward mankind; but how than may it be,
That ye ſwiche menes make it to deſtroyen?
Which menes don no good, but ever anoyen.
I wote wel, clerkes wol ſain as hem leſt
By arguments, that all is for the beſt,
Though I ne can the cauſes nought yknow;
But thilke God that made the wind to blow,
As kepe my lord, this is my concluſion:
To clerkes lete I all diſputiſon:
But wolde God, that all thiſe rockes blake
Were ſonken into helle for his ſake.
Thiſe rockes ſlee min herte for the fere.
Thus wold ſhe ſay with many a pitous tere.

Hire frendes ſaw that it was no diſport
To romen by the ſee, but diſcomfort,
And ſhape hem for to plaien ſomwher elles.
They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
And eke in other places delitables;
They dancen and they play at ches and tables.

So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
Unto a gardin that was ther beſide,
In which that they had made hir ordinance
Of vitaille, and of other purveance,
They gon and plaie hem all the longe day:
And this was on the ſixte morwe of May,
Which May had peinted with his ſofte ſhoures
This gardin ful of leves and of floures:
And craft of mannes hond ſo curiouſly
Arrayed had this gardin trewely,
That never was ther gardin of ſwiche pris,
But if it were the veray paradis.
The odour of floures, and the freſhe ſight,
Wold han ymaked any herte light
That ever was born, but if to gret ſikeneſſe
Or to gret ſorwe held it in diſtreſſe,
So ful it was of beautee and pleſance.

And after dinner gonnen they to dance
And ſing alſo, ſauf Dorigene alone,
Which made alway hire complaint and hire mone,

For ſhe ne ſaw him on the dance go,
That was hire huſbond, and hire love alſo:
But nathlees ſhe muſt a time abide,
And with good hope let hire ſorwe ſlide.
Upon this dance, amonges other men,
Danced a ſquier before Dorigen,
That freſher was and jolier of array,
As to my dome, than is the month of May.
He ſingeth, danceth, paſſing any man,
That is or was ſin that the world began;
Therwith he was, if men ſhuld him diſcrive,
On of the beſte faring men on live,
Yong, ſtrong, and virtuous, and riche, and wiſe,
And wel beloved, and holden in gret priſe.
And ſhortly, if the ſoth I tellen ſhal,
Unweting of this Dorigene at al,
This luſty ſquier, ſervant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Had loved hire beſt of any creature
Two yere and more, as was his aventure:
But never dorſt he tell hire his grevance,
Withouten cup he dranke all his penance.
He was diſpeired, nothing dorſt he ſay,
Sauf in his ſonges ſomwhat wold he wray
His wo, as in a general complaining;
He ſaid, he loved, and was beloved nothing.

Of ſwiche matere made he many layes,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes;
How that he dorſte not his ſorwe telle,
But languiſheth, as doth a furie in helle;
And die he muſt, he ſaid, as did Ecco
For Narciſſus, that dorſt not tell hire wo.

In other maner than ye here me ſay,
Ne dorſt he not to hire his wo bewray,
Sauf that paraventure ſomtime at dances,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir obſervances,
It may wel be he loked on hire face
In ſwiche a wiſe, as man that axeth grace,
But nothing wiſte ſhe of his entent.
Natheles it happed, or they thennes went,
Becauſe that he was hire neighebour,
And was a man of worſhip and honour,
And had yknowen him of time yore,
They fell in ſpeche, and forth ay more and more
Unto his purpos drow Aurelius;
And whan he ſaw his time, he ſaide thus.
Madame, quod he, by God that this world made,
So that I wiſt it might your herte glade,
I wold that day, that your Arviragus
Went over ſee, that I Aurelius
Had went ther I ſhuld never come again;
For wel I wot my ſervice is in vain,

My guerdon n'is but breſting of min herte.
Madame, rueth upon my peines ſmerte,
For with a word ye may me ſleen or ſave.
Here at your feet God wold that I were grave.
I ne have as now no leiſer more to ſey:
Have mercy, ſwete, or ye wol do me dey.

She gan to loke upon Aurelius;
Is this your will (quod ſhe) and ſay ye thus?
Never erſt (quod ſhe) ne wiſt I what ye ment:
But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.
By thilke God that yaf me ſoule and lif,
Ne ſhal I never ben an untrewe wif
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit,
I wol ben his to whom that I am knit:
Take this for final anſwer as of me.
But after that in play thus ſaide ſhe.

Aurelie, (quod ſhe) by high God above
Yet wol I granten you to ben your love,
(Sin I you ſee ſo pitouſly complaine)
Loke, what day that endelong Bretaigne
Ye remue all the rockes, ſton by ſton,
That they ne letten ſhip ne bote to gon,
I ſay, whan ye han made the coſt ſo clene
Of rockes, that ther n'is no ſton yſene,
Than wol I love you beſt of any man,
Have here my trouth, in all that ever I can;

For wel I wote that it ſhal never betide.
Let ſwiche folie out of your herte glide.
What deintee ſhuld a man have in his lif
For to go love another mannes wif,
That hath hire body whan that ever him liketh?
Aurelius ful often ſore ſiketh;
Is ther non other grace in you? quod he.
No, by that lord, quod ſhe, that maked me.
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herd,
And with a ſorweful herte he thus anſwerd.
Madame, quod he, this were an impoſſible.
Than moſte I die of ſoden deth horrible.
And with that word he turned him anon.
Tho come hire other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and doun,
And nothing wiſt of this concluſioun,
But ſodenly begonnen revel newe,
Til that the brighte ſonne had loſt his hewe,
For the orizont had reft the ſonne his light;
(This is as much to ſayn as it was night)
And home they gon in mirthe and in ſolas;
Sauf only wrecche Aurelius, alas!
He to his hous is gon with ſorweful herte.
He ſaith, he may not from his deth aſterte.
Him ſemeth, that he felt his herte cold.
Up to the heven his hondes gan he hold,

And on his knees bare he ſet him doun,
And in his raving ſaid his oriſoun.
For veray wo out of his wit he braide,
He n'iſte what he ſpake, but thus he ſaide;
With pitous herte his plaint hath he begonne
Unto the goddes, and firſt unto the ſonne.
He ſaid; Apollo, God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yeveſt after thy declination
To eche of hem his time and his ſeſon,
As that thin herbergh changeth low and hie;
Lord Phebus, caſt thy merciable eie
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorne.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth yſworne
Withouten gilt, but thy benignitee
Upon my dedly herte have ſom pitee.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you leſt,
Ye may me helpen, ſauf my lady, beſt.
Now voucheth ſauf, that I may you deviſe
How that I may be holpe and in what wiſe.
Your blisful ſuſter, Lucina the ſhene,
That of the ſee is chief goddeſſe and quene,
Though Neptunus have deitee in the ſee,
Yet emperice aboven him is ſhe:
Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hire deſire
Is to be quiked and lighted of your fire,

For which ſhe folweth you ful befily,
Right ſo the ſee deſireth naturelly
To folwen hire, as ſhe that is goddeſſe
Both in the ſee and rivers more and leſſe.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeſt,
Do this miracle, or do min herte breſt;
That now next at this oppoſition,
Which in the ſigne ſhal be of the Leon,
As preyeth hire ſo gret a flood to bring,
That five fadome at the leſt it overſpring
The higheſt rock in Armorike Bretaigne,
And let this flood enduren yeres twaine:
Than certes to my lady may I ſay,
Holdeth your heſt, the rockes ben away.
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
Prey hire ſhe go no faſter cours than ye;
I ſay this, preyeth your ſuſter that ſhe go
No faſter cours than ye thiſe yeres two:
Than ſhal ſhe ben even at ful alway,
And ſpring-flood laſten bothe night and day.
And but ſhe voucheſauf in ſwiche manere
To graunten me my ſoveraine lady dere,
Prey hire to ſinken every rock adoun
Into hire owen derke regioun
Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth in,
Or nevermo ſhal I my lady win.

Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot ſeke.
Lord Phebus, ſee the teres on my cheke,
And on my peine have ſom compaſſioun.
And with that word, in ſorwe he fell adoun,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penance,
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
Diſpeired in this turment and this thought
Let I this woful creature lie,
Cheſe he for me whether he wol live or die.

Arviragus with hele and gret honour
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That haſt thy luſty huſbond in thin armes,
The freſhe knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his owen hertes lif:
Nothing liſt him to be imaginatif,
If any wight had ſpoke, while he was oute,
To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
He not entendeth to no ſwiche matere,
But danceth, juſteth, and maketh mery chere.
And thus in joye and bliſſe I let hem dwell,
And of the ſike Aurelius wol I tell.

In langour and in turment furious
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,

Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
Ne comfort in this time ne had he non,
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of all this wo and all this werk;
For to non other creature certain
Of this matere he dorſte no word ſain;
Under his breſt he bare it more ſecree,
Than ever did Pamphilus for Galathee.
His breſt was hole withouten for to ſeen,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene,
And wel ye knowe that of a ſurſanure
In ſurgerie is perilous the cure,
But men might touch the arwe or come therby.

His brother wepeth and waileth prively,
Til at the laſt him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleaunce in France,
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
To reden artes that ben curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particuler ſciences for to lerne,
He him remembred, that upon a day
At Orleaunce in ſtudie a book he ſay
Of Magike naturel, which his felaw,
That was that time a bacheler of law,
Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Had prively upon his deſk ylaft;

Which book ſpake moche of operations
Touching the eight and twenty manſions
That longen to the Mone, and ſwiche folie
As in our dayes n'is not worth a flie:
For holy cherches feith, in our beleve,
Ne ſuffreth non illuſion us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembrance,
Anon for joye his herte gan to dance,
And to himſelf he ſaied prively;
My brother ſhal be warished haſtily:
For I am ſiker that ther be ſciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thiſe ſubtil tregetoures play.
For oft at feſtes have I wel herd ſay,
That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Somtime hath ſemed come a grim leoun,
And ſomtime floures ſpring as in a mede,
Somtime a vine, and grapes white and rede,
Somtime a caſtel al of lime and ſton,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon:
Thus ſemeth it to every mannes ſight.

Now than conclude I thus, if that I might
At Orleaunce ſom olde felaw find,
That hath thiſe Mones manſions in mind,

Or other Magike naturel above,
He ſhuld wel make my brother have his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes ſight, that all the rockes blake
Of Bretaigne were yvoided everich on,
And ſhippes by the brinke comen and gon,
And in ſwiche forme endure a day or two:
Than were my brother wariſhed of his wo,
Than muſt ſhe nedes holden hire beheſt,
Or elles he ſhal ſhame hire at the leſt.

What ſhuld I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bed he comen is,
And ſwiche comfort he yaf him, for to gon
To Orleaunce, that he up ſtert anon,
And on his way forthward than is he fare,
In hope for to ben liſſed of his care.

Whan they were come almoſt to that citee,
But if it were a two furlong or three,
A yonge clerk roming by himſelf they mette,
Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.
And after that he ſayd a wonder thing;
I know, quod he, the cauſe of your coming:
And or they forther any foote went,
He told hem all that was in hir entent.

This Breton clerk him axed of felawes,
The which he had yknowen in olde dawes,

And he anſwered him that they dede were,
For which he wept ful often many a tere.
Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magicien is gon
Home to his hous, and made hem wel at eſe:
Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem pleſe.
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,
Aurelius in his lif ſaw never non.
He ſhewed him, or they went to ſoupere,
Foreſtes, parkes ful of wilde dere.
Ther ſaw he hartes with hir hornes hie,
The greteſt that were ever ſeen with eie.
He ſaw of hem an hundred ſlain with houndes,
And ſom with arwes blede of bitter woundes.
He ſaw, whan voided were the wilde dere,
Thiſe fauconers upon a faire rivere,
That with hir haukes han the heron ſlain.
Tho ſaw he knightes juſten in a plain.
And after this he did him ſwiche pleſance,
That he him ſhewed his lady on a dance,
On which himſelven danced, as him thought.
And whan this maiſter, that this magike wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,
And farewel, al the revel is ago.
And yet remued they never out of the hous,
While they ſaw all thiſe ſightes merveillous;

But in his ſtudie, ther his bookes be,
They ſaten ſtill, and no wight but they three.
To him this maiſter called his ſquier,
And ſayd him thus, may we go to ſouper?
Almoſt an houre it is, I undertake,
Sin I you bade our ſouper for to make,
Whan that thiſe worthy men wenten with me
Into my ſtudie, ther my bookes be.
Sire, quod this ſquier, whan it liketh you,
It is al redy, though ye wol right now.
Go we than ſoupe, quod he, as for the beſt,
Thiſe amorous folk ſomtime moſte han reſt.
At after ſouper fell they in tretee
What ſumme ſhuld this maiſters guerdon be,
To remue all the rockes of Bretaigne,
And eke from Gerounde to the mouth of Saine.
He made it ſtrange, and ſwore, ſo God him ſave,
Leſſe than a thouſand pound he wold not have,
Ne gladly for that ſumme he wold not gon.
Aurelius with blisful herte anon
Anſwered thus; fie on a thouſand pound:
This wide world, which that men ſayn is round,
I wold it yeve, if I were lord of it.
This bargaine is ful-drive, for we ben knit;
Ye ſhul be paied trewely by my trouth.
But loketh, for non negligence or ſlouth,

Ye tarie us here no lenger than to morwe.
Nay, quod this clerk, have here my faith to borwe.
To bed is gon Aurelius whan him left,
And wel nigh all that night he had his reft,
What for his labour, and his hope of bliffe,
His woful herte of penance had a liffe.
Upon the morwe whan that it was day,
To Bretaigne token they the righte way,
Aurelie, and this magicien him befide,
And ben defcended ther they wold abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde frofty feſon of December.
Phebus waxe old, and hewed like laton,
That in his hote declination
Shone as the burned gold, with ſtremes bright;
But now in Capricorne adoun he light,
Wher as he ſhone ful pale, I dare wel ſain.
The bitter froſtes with the ſleet and rain
Deſtroyed han the grene in every yerd.
Janus ſit by the fire with double berd,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Beforn him ſtant braune of the tuſked ſwine,
And *nowel* crieth every luſty man.
Aurelius in all that ever he can,
Doth to his maiſter chere and reverence,
And praieth him to don his diligence

To bringen him out of his peines ſmerte,
Or with a ſwerd that he wold ſlit his herte.
This ſotil clerk ſwiche routh hath on this man,
That night and day he ſpedeth him, that he can,
To wait a time of his concluſion;
This is to ſayn, to make illuſion,
By ſwiche an apparence or joglerie,
(I can no termes of Aſtrologie)
That ſhe and every wight ſhuld wene and ſay,
That of Bretaigne the rockes were away,
Or elles they were ſonken under ground.
So at the laſt he hath his time yfound
To make his japes and his wretchedneſſe
Of ſwiche a ſuperſtitious curſedneſſe.
His tables Toletanes forth he brought
Ful wel corrected, that ther lacked nought,
Nother his collect, ne his expans yeres,
Nother his rotes, ne his other geres,
As ben his centres, and his argumentes,
And his proportionel convenientes
For his equations in every thing.
And by his eighte ſperes in his werking,
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was ſhove
Fro the hed of thilke fix Aries above,
That in the ninthe ſpere conſidered is.
Ful ſotilly he calculed all this.

Whan he had found his firſte manſion,
He knew the remenant by proportion;
And knew the riſing of his mone wel,
And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
And knew ful wel the mones manſion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew alſo his other obſervances,
For ſwiche illuſions and ſwiche meſchances,
As hethen folk uſed in thilke daies.
For which no lenger maketh he delaies,
But thurgh his magike, for a day or tway,
It ſemed all the rockes were away.
Aurelius, which that deſpeired is,
Whether he ſhal han his love, or fare amis,
Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:
And whan he knew that ther was non obſtacle,
That voided were thiſe rockes everich on,
Doun to his maiſters feet he fell anon,
And ſayd; I woful wretch Aurelius,
Thanke you, my lord, and lady min Venus,
That me han holpen fro my cares cold.
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Theras he knew he ſhuld his lady ſee.
And whan he ſaw his time, anon right he
With dredful herte and with ful humble chere
Salued hath his ſoveraine lady dere.

My rightful lady, quod this woful man,
Whom I moſt drede, and love, as I beſt can,
And lotheſt were of all this world diſpleſe,
N'ere it that I for you have ſwiche diſeſe,
That I muſt die here at your foot anon,
Nought wold I tell how me is wo begon.
But certes other muſt I die or plaine;
Ye ſle me gilteles for veray peine.
But of my deth though that ye han no routh,
Aviſeth you, or that ye breke your trouth:
Repenteth you for thilke God above,
Or ye me ſle, becauſe that I you love.
For, madame, wel ye wote what ye have hight;
Not that I chalenge any thing of right
Of you, my ſoveraine lady, but of grace;
But in a gardin yond, in ſwiche a place,
Ye wote right wel what ye behighten me,
And in myn hond your trouthe plighten ye,
To love me beſt; God wote ye ſaied ſo,
Although that I unworthy be therto;
Madame, I ſpeke it for the honour of you,
More than to ſave my hertes lif right now:
I have don ſo as ye commanded me,
And if ye vouchefauf, ye may go ſee.
Doth as you liſt, have your beheſt in mind,
For quick or ded, right ther ye ſhul me find:

In you lith all to do me live or dey,
But wel I wote the rockes ben awey.
He taketh his leve, and ſhe aſtonied ſtood;
In all hire face n'as o drope of blood:
She wened never han come in ſwiche a trappe.
Alas! quod ſhe, that ever this ſhuld happe!
For wend I never by poſſibilitee,
That ſwiche a monſtre or mervaille might be;
It is again the proceſſe of nature.
And home ſhe goth a ſorweful creature,
For veray fere unnethes may ſhe go.
She wepeth, waileth all a day or two,
And ſwouneth, that it routhe was to ſee:
But why it was, to no wight tolde ſhe,
For out of toun was gon Arviragus.
But to hireſelf ſhe ſpake, and ſaied thus,
With face pale, and with ful ſory chere,
In hire complaint, as ye ſhul after here.
Alas! quod ſhe, on thee, fortune, I plain,
That unware haſt me wrapped in thy chain:
Fro which to eſcapen, wote I no ſoccour,
Sauf only deth, or elles diſhonour:
On of thiſe two behoveth me to cheſe.
But natheles, yet had I lever leſe
My lif, than of my body have a ſhame,
Or know myſelven falſe, or leſe my name;

And with my deth I may be quit ywis.
Hath ther not many a noble wif or this,
And many a maid yſlaine hireſelf, alas!
Rather than with hire body don treſpas?
Yes certes; lo, thiſe ſtories bere witneſſe.

Whan thirty tyrants ful of curſedneſſe
Had ſlain Phidon in Athens at the feſt,
They commanded his doughtren for to arreſt,
And bringen hem beforne hem in deſpit
Al naked, to fulfill hir foule delit;
And in hir fadres blood they made hem dance
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meſchance.
For which thiſe woful maidens ful of drede,
Rather than they wold leſe hir maidenhede,
They prively ben ſtert into a welle,
And dreint hemſelven, as the bookes telle.

They of Meſſene let enquere and ſeke
Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,
On which they wolden don hir lecherie:
But ther was non of all that compagnie
That ſhe n'as ſlaine, and with a glad entent
Chees rather for to dien, than aſſent
To ben oppreſſed of hire maidenhede.
Why ſhuld I than to dien ben in drede?

Lo eke the tyrant Ariſtoclides,
That loved a maid hight Stimphalides,

Whan that hire father ſlaine was on a night,
Unto Dianes temple goth ſhe right,
And hente the image in hire handes two,
Fro which image wold ſhe never go,
No wight hire handes might of it arrace,
Til ſhe was ſlaine right in the ſelve place.

Now ſin that maidens hadden ſwiche deſpit
To be defouled with mannes foule delit,
Wel ought a wif rather hireſelven ſle,
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.

What ſhal I ſayn of Haſdrubales wif,
That at Cartage beraft hireſelf hire lif?
For whan ſhe ſaw that Romains wan the toun,
She toke hire children all, and ſkipt adoun
Into the fire, and chees rather to die,
Than any Romain did hire vilanie.

Hath not Lucrece yſlaine hireſelf, alas!
At Rome, whan that ſhe oppreſſed was
Of Tarquine? for hire thought it was a ſhame
To liven, whan ſhe hadde loſt hire name.

The ſeven maidens of Mileſie alſo
Han ſlaine hemſelf for veray drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gaule hem ſhuld oppreſſe.

Mo than a thouſand ſtories, as I geſſe,
Coude I now tell as touching this matere.

Whan Abradate was ſlain, his wif ſo dere

Hireſelven ſlow, and let hire blood to glide
In Abradates woundes, depe and wide,
And ſayd, my body at the lefte way
Ther ſhal no wight defoulen, if I may.

What ſhuld I mo enſamples hereof ſain?
Sin that ſo many han hemſelven ſlain
Wel rather than they wold defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To ſle myſelf than be defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or elles ſle myſelf in ſome manere,
As did Demotiones doughter dere,
Becauſe ſhe wolde not defouled be.

O Sedaſus, it is ful gret pitee
To reden how thy doughtren died, alas!
That ſlowe hemſelven for ſwiche maner cas.

As gret a pitee was it or wel more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nichanore
Hireſelven ſlow, right for ſwiche manere wo.
Another Theban mayden did right ſo,
For on of Macedoine had hire oppreſſed,
She with hire deth hire maidenhed redreſſed.

What ſhal I ſain of Nicerates wif,
That for ſwiche cas beraft hireſelf hire lif?

How trewe was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chees,

Than for to ſuffre his body unburied be?
Lo, which a wif was Alceſte eke? (quod ſhe)
What ſayth Homere of good Penelope?
All Grece knoweth of hire chaſtitee.
Parde of Laodomia is written thus,
That whan at Troye was ſlain Protheſilaus,
No lenger wolde ſhe live after his day.
The ſame of noble Portia tell I may;
Withouten Brutus coude ſhe not live,
To whom ſhe had all hol hire herte yeve.
The parfit wifhood of Artemiſie
Honoured is thurghout all Barbarie.
O Teuta quene, thy wifly chaſtitee
To alle wives may a mirrour be.
Thus plained Dorigene a day or twey,
Purpoſing ever that ſhe wolde dey;
But natheles upon the thridde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And axed hire why that ſhe weep ſo ſore:
And ſhe gan wepen ever lenger the more.
Alas, quod ſhe, that ever I was yborne!
Thus have I ſaid, (quod ſhe) thus have I ſworne.
And told him all, as ye have herd before:
It nedeth not reherſe it you no more.
This huſbond with glad chere in frendly wiſe
Anſwerd and ſayd, as I ſhal you deviſe.

Is ther ought elles, Dorigene, but this?
Nay, nay, quod ſhe, God helpe me ſo, as wis
This is to much, and it were Goddes will.
Ye, wif, quod he, let ſlepen that is ſtill,
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.
Ye ſhal your trouthe holden by my fay.
For God ſo wiſly have mercy on me,
I had wel lever ſtiked for to be,
For veray love which that I to you have,
But if ye ſhuld your trouthe kepe and ſave.
Trouth is the hieſt thing that man may kepe.
But with that word he braſt anon to wepe,
And ſayd; I you forbede on peine of deth,
That never while you laſteth lif or breth,
To no wight tell ye this miſaventure.
As I may beſt I wol my wo endure.
Ne make no contenance of hevineſſe,
That folk of you may demen harme or geſſe.
And forth he cleped a ſquier and a maid.
Goth forth anon with Dorigene, he ſaid,
And bringeth hire to ſwiche a place anon.
They take hir leve, and on hir way they gon:
But they ne wiſten why ſhe thider went,
She n'olde no wight tellen hire entent.
This ſquier, which that highte Aurelius,
On Dorigene that was ſo amorous,

Of aventure happed hire to mete
Amid the toun, right in the quikkeſt ſtrete,
As ſhe was boun to go the way forthright
Toward the gardin, ther as ſhe had hight.
And he was to the gardinward alſo;
For wel he ſpied whan ſhe wolde go
Out of hire hous, to any maner place:
But thus they met of aventure or grace,
And he ſalueth hire with glad entent,
And axeth of hire whiderward ſhe went.
And ſhe anſwered, half as ſhe were mad,
Unto the gardin, as myn huſbond bad,
My trouthe for to hold, alas! alas!
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte had gret compaſſion
Of hire, and of hire lamentation,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden all that ſhe had hight,
So loth him was his wif ſhuld breke hire trouthe.
And in his herte he caught of it gret routhe,
Conſidering the beſt on every ſide,
That fro his luſt yet were him lever abide,
Than do ſo high a cherliſh wretchedneſſe
Ageins fraunchiſe, and alle gentilleſſe;
For which in fewe wordes ſayd he thus.
Madame, ſay to your lord Arviragus,

That ſin I ſee the grete gentilleſſe
Of him, and eke I ſee wel your diſtreſſe,
That him were lever have ſhame (and that were routhe)
Than ye to me ſhuld breken thus your trouthe,
I hadde wel lever ever to ſuffren wo,
Than to depart the love betwix you two.
I you releſe, madame, into your hond
Quit every ſeurement and every bond,
That ye han made to me, as herebeforne,
Sin thilke time that ye were yborne.
Have here my trouthe, I ſhal you never repreve
Of no beheſt, and here I take my leve,
As of the treweſt and the beſte wif,
That ever yet I knew in all my lif.
But every wif beware of hire beheſt;
On Dorigene remembreth at the leſt.
Thus can a ſquier don a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knight, withouten drede.

She thanketh him upon hire knees bare,
And home unto hire huſbond is ſhe fare,
And told him all, as ye han herd me ſayd:
And, truſteth me, he was ſo wel apayd,
That it were impoſſible me to write.

What ſhuld I lenger of this cas endite?
Arviragus and Dorigene his wif
In ſoveraine bliſſe leden forth hir lif,

Never eft ne was ther anger hem betwene;
He cheriſhed hire as though ſhe were a quene,
And ſhe was to him trewe for evermore:
Of thiſe two folk ye get of me no more.
Aurelius, that his coſt hath all forlorne,
Curſeth the time, that ever he was borne.
Alas! quod he, alas that I behight
Of pured gold a thouſand pound of wight
Unto this philoſophre! how ſhal I do?
I ſee no more, but that I am fordo.
Min heritage mote I nedes ſell,
And ben a begger, here I n'ill not dwell,
And ſhamen all my kinrede in this place,
But I of him may geten better grace.
But natheles I wol of him aſſay
At certain daies yere by yere to pay,
And thanke him of his grete curteſie.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lie.
With herte ſore he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philoſophre,
The value of five hundred pound I geſſe,
And him beſecheth of his gentilleſſe
To graunt him daies of the remenaunt,
And ſayde; maiſter, I dare wel make avaunt,
I failled never of my trouthe as yet.
For ſikerly my dette ſhal be quit

Towardes you, how ſo that ever I fare
To gon a begging in my kirtle bare:
But wold ye vouchen ſauf upon ſeurtee
Two yere or three for to reſpiten me,
Than were I wel, for elles mote I ſell
Min heritage, ther is no more to tell.

This Philoſophre ſobrely anſwerd,
And ſaied thus, whan he thiſe wordes herd;
Have I not holden covenant to thee?

Yes certes, wel and trewely, quod he.
Haſt thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?

No, no, quod he, and ſorwefully he ſiketh.
What was the cauſe? tell me if thou can.

Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye han herd before,
It nedeth not reherſe it any more.
He ſayd, Arviragus of gentilleſſe
Had lever die in ſorwe and in diſtreſſe,
Than that his wif were of hire trouthe fals.
The ſorwe of Dorigene he told him als,
How loth hire was to ben a wicked wif,
And that ſhe lever had loſt that day hire lif;
And that her trouth ſhe ſwore thurgh innocence;
She never erſt hadde herd ſpeke of apparence:
That made me han of hire ſo gret pitee,
And right as freely as he ſent hire to me,

As freely ſent I hire to him again:
This is all and ſom, ther n'is no more to ſain.
The Philoſophre anſwerd; leve brother,
Everich of you did gentilly to other:
Thou art a ſquier, and he is a knight,
But God forbede for his blisful might,
But if a clerk coud don a gentil dede
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.
Sire, I releſe thee thy thouſand pound,
As thou right now were crope out of the ground,
Ne never er now ne haddeſt knowen me.
For, ſire, I wol not take a peny of thee
For all my craft, ne nought for my travaille:
Thou haſt ypaied wel for my vitaille.
It is ynough, and farewel, have good day.
And toke his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordings, this queſtion wold I axen now,
Which was the moſte free, as thinketh you?
Now telleth me, or that ye further wende.
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

v. 11929—11944

Ye, let that paſſen, quod oure Hoſte, as now.
Sire Doctour of Phyſike, I prey you,
Tell us a tale of ſom honeſt matere.
It ſhal be don, if that ye wol it here,
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.
Now, good men, quod he, herkeneth everich on.

THE DOCTOURES TALE.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfilled of honour and worthineſſe,
And ſtrong of frendes, and of gret richeſſe.
This knight a doughter hadde by his wif.
No children had he mo in all his lif.
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may ſee:
For nature hath with ſoveraine diligence
Yformed hire in ſo gret excellence,

As though ſhe wolde ſayn, lo, I nature,
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,
Whan that me lift; who can me contrefete?
Pigmalion? not, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peinte: for I dare wel ſain,
Apelles, Xeuxis, ſhulden werche in vain,
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete,
If they preſumed me to contrefete.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath maked me his vicaire general
To forme and peinten erthly creatures
Right as me lift, and eche thing in my cure is
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.
I made hire to the worſhip of my lord;
So do I all min other creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus ſemeth me that nature wolde ſay.

This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,
In which that nature hadde ſwiche delit,
For right as ſhe can peint a lily whit
And red a roſe, right with ſwiche peinture
She peinted hath this noble creature
Er ſhe was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Wheras by right ſwiche colours ſhulden be:

And Phebus died hath hire treſſes grete,
Like to the ſtremes of his burned hete.
And if that excellent were hire beautee,
A thouſand fold more vertuous was ſhe.
In hire ne lacked no condition,
That is to preiſe, as by diſcretion.
As wel in goſt as body, chaſt was ſhe:
For which ſhe floured in virginitee,
With all humilitee and abſtinence,
With all attemperance and patience,
With meſure eke, of bering and array.
Diſcrete ſhe was in anſwering alway,
Though ſhe were wife as Pallas, dare I ſain,
Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,
No contrefeted termes hadde ſhe
To ſemen wiſe; but after hire degree
She ſpake, and all hire wordes more and leſſe
Souning in vertue and in gentilleſſe.
Shamefaſt ſhe was in maidens ſhamefaſtneſſe,
Conſtant in herte, and ever in beſineſſe
To drive hire out of idel ſlogardie:
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maiſtrie.
For wine and youthe don Venus encreſe,
As men in fire wol caſten oile and greſe.
And of hire owen vertue unconſtreined,
She hath hireſelf ful often ſike yfeined,

For that ſhe wolde fleen the compagnie,
Wher likely was to treten of folie,
As is at feſtes, at revels, and at dances,
That ben occaſions of daliances.
Swiche thinges maken children for to be
To ſone ripe and bold, as men may ſee,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al to ſone may ſhe lernen lore
Of boldneſſe, whan ſhe woxen is a wif.

And ye maiſtreſſes in your olde lif,
That lordes doughters han in governance,
Ne taketh of my wordes diſpleſance:
Thinketh that ye ben ſet in governinges
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges;
Other for ye han kept your honeſtee,
Or elles for ye han fallen in freeltee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,
And han forſaken fully ſwiche meſchance
For evermo: therfore for Criſtes ſake
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne ſlake.

A theef of veniſon, that hath forlaft
His likerouſneſſe, and all his olde craft,
Can kepe a foreſt beſt of any man:
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can.
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice aſſent,
Leſt ye be damned for your wikke entent,

For who ſo doth, a traytour is certain:
And taketh kepe of that I ſhal you ſain;
Of alle treſon ſoveraine peſtilence
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.

Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke alſo,
Though ye han children, be it on or mo,
Your is the charge of all hir ſurveance,
While that they ben under your governance.
Beth ware, that by enſample of your living,
Or by your negligence in chaſtiſing,
That they ne periſh: for I dare wel ſaye,
If that they don, ye ſhul it dere abeye.
Under a ſhepherd ſoft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a ſhepe and lamb to-rent.

Sufficeth this enſample now as here,
For I mote turne agen to my matere.

This maid, of which I tell my tale expreſſe,
She kept hireſelf, hire neded no maiſtreſſe;
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,
As in a book, every good word and dede,
That longeth to a maiden vertuous:
She was ſo prudent and ſo bounteous.
For which the fame out ſprong on every ſide
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide:
That thurgh the lond they preiſed hire ech one,
That loved vertue, ſauf envie alone,

That ſory is of other mannes wele,
And glad is of his ſorwe and his unhele.
The doctour maketh this deſcriptioun.
This maiden on a day went in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,
As is of yonge maidens the manere.
Now was ther than a juſtice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun:
And ſo befell, this juge his eyen caſt
Upon this maid, aviſing hire ful faſt,
As ſhe came forth by ther this juge ſtood:
Anon his herte changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,
And to himſelf ful prively he ſaid,
This maiden ſhal be min for any man.
Anon the fend into his herte ran,
And taught him ſodenly, that he by ſleight
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to ſpede;
For ſhe was ſtrong of frendes, and eke ſhe
Confermed was in ſwiche ſoveraine bountee,
That wel he wiſt he might hire never winne,
As for to make hire with hire body ſinne.
For which with gret deliberatioun
He ſent after a cherl was in the toun,

The which he knew for ſotil and for bold.
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told
In ſecree wiſe, and made him to enſure,
He ſhulde tell it to no creature,
And if he did, he ſhulde leſe his hede.
And whan aſſented was this curſed rede,
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,
And yaf him yeftes precious and dere.

Whan ſhapen was all hir conſpiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie
Parformed ſhulde be ful ſotilly,
As ye ſhul here it after openly,
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.
This falſe juge, that highte Appius,
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for an hiſtorial thing notable;
The ſentence of it ſoth is out of doute)
This falſe juge goth now faſt aboute
To haſten his delit all that he may.
And ſo befell, ſone after on a day
This falſe juge, as telleth us the ſtorie,
As he was wont, ſat in his conſiſtorie,
And yaf his domes upon ſondry cas;
This falſe cherl came forth a ful gret pas,
And ſaide; lord, if that it be your will,
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,

In which I plaine upon Virginius.
And if that he wol ſayn it is not thus,
I wol it preve, and finden good witneſſe,
That ſoth is that my bille wol expreſſe.
The juge anſwerd, of this in his abſence
I may not yeve diffinitif ſentence.
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here;
Thou ſhalt have right, and no wrong as now here.
Virginius came to wete the juges will,
And right anon was red this curſed bill;
The ſentence of it was as ye ſhul here.
To you, my lord ſire Appius ſo dere,
Sheweth your poure ſervant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,
Holdeth, expreſſe agein the will of me,
My ſervant, which that is my thral by right,
Which from min hous was ſtolen on a night
While that ſhe was ful yong, I wol it preve
By witneſſe, lord, ſo that it you not greve;
She n'is his doughter nought, what ſo he ſay.
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.
Lo, this was all the ſentence of his bill.
Virginius gan upon the cherl behold;
But haſtily, er he his tale told,

And wold han preved it, as ſhuld a knight,
And eke by witneſſing of many a wight,
That all was falſe, that ſaid his adverſary,
This curſed juge wolde nothing tary,
Ne here a word more of Virginius,
But yave his jugement, and ſaide thus.
I deme anon this cherl his ſervant have.
Thou ſhalt no lenger in thin hous hire ſave.
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.
The cherl ſhal have his thral; thus I award.
And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh ſentence of this juſtice Appius,
Muſte by force his dere doughter yeven
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,
He goth him home, and ſet him in his hall,
And let anon his dere doughter call:
And with a face ded as aſhen cold,
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,
With fadres pitee ſtiking thurgh his herte,
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.
Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,
Ther ben two waies, other deth or ſhame,
That thou muſt ſuffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou deſervedeſt wherfore
To dien with a ſwerd or with a knif.
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,

Which I have foſtred up with ſwiche pleſance,
That thou were never out of my remembrance;
O doughter, which that art my laſte wo,
And in my lif my laſte joye alſo,
O gemme of chaſtitee, in patience
Take thou thy deth, for this is my ſentence;
For love and not for hate thou muſt be ded,
My pitous hond muſt ſmiten of thin hed.
Alas that ever Appius thee ſay!
Thus hath he falſely juged thee to-day.
And told hire all the cas, as ye before
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.
O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.
And with that word ſhe both hire armes laid
About his necke, as ſhe was wont to do,
(The teres braſt out of hire eyen two,)
And ſaid, O goode father, ſhal I die?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie?
No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.
Than yeve me leiſer, father min, quod ſhe,
My deth for to complaine a litel ſpace:
For parde Jepte yave his doughter grace
For to complaine, or he hire ſlow, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was hire treſpas,
But for ſhe ran hire father firſt to ſee,
To welcome him with gret ſolempnitee.

And with that word ſhe fell aſwoune anon,
And after, whan hire ſwouning was agon,
She riſeth up, and to hire father ſaid:
Bleſſed be God, that I ſhall die a maid.
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a ſhame.
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.
And with that word ſhe praied him ful oft,
That with his ſwerd he wolde ſmite hire ſoft;
And with that word, aſwoune again ſhe fell.
Hire father, with ful ſorweful herte and will,
Hire hed of ſmote, and by the top it hent,
And to the juge he gan it to preſent,
As he ſat yet in dome in conſiſtorie.

And whan the juge it ſaw, as ſaith the ſtorie,
He bad to take him, and anhang him faſt.
But right anon a thouſand peple in thraſt
To ſave the knight, for routh and for pitee,
For knowen was the falſe iniquitee.

The peple anon had ſuſpect in this thing
By maner of the cherles chalenging,
That it was by the aſſent of Appius;
They wiſten wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And caſte him in a priſon right anon,
Wheras he ſlow himſelf: and Claudius,
That ſervant was unto this Appius,

Was demed for to hange upon a tree;
But that Virginius of his pitee
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes had he ben begiled:
The remenant were anhanged, more and leſſe,
That were conſentant of this curſedneſſe.
Here men may ſee how ſin hath his merite:
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol ſmite
In no degree, ne in which maner wiſe
The worme of conſcience may agriſe
Of wicked lif, though it ſo privee be,
That no man wote therof, ſauf God and he:
For be he lewed man or elles lered,
He n'ot how ſone that he ſhal ben afered.
Therfore I rede you this conſeil take,
Forſaketh ſinne, or ſinne you forſake.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

BRITISH MUSEUM

(SWAHILI)

(ROMANIZED)